

Chapter 11

Setting the course for the preparation of
offensive actions of the Red Army

Stalin's speech of April 14(17), 1940 to senior Red Army commanders.
commanders of the Red Army.

Stalin's strategy, which formed the decisive basis for the further expansion and development of the Red Army, was by no means an aggressive strategy from the outset. In the years 1938/1939 to 1941, however, the development of the Red Army underwent a gradual change from a defensive instrument to an army with an offensive mission. The reconquest of western Belarus and western Ukraine as well as the Finnish campaign were already steps along this path.

Let us look at a few excerpts from the military-political situation in April 1940, the time of Stalin's speech:

○ The Polish campaigns of Germany and the Soviet Union had created a common demarcation line in 1939 and eliminated the buffer state of Poland between the USSR and Germany, a buffer which in September 1938 had made it impossible for the Red Army to intervene in a possible looming German-Czech military conflict and because of which, among other things, the talks of the French-English-Soviet military missions in August 1939 had also failed.

○ The Russian-Finnish war had ended with the signing of a peace treaty (March 12, 1940) on March 13, 1940. Although only partial successes were achieved, Stalin nevertheless secured a strategically more favorable starting position for securing the northern flank of the future deployment area, including in the eastern Baltic Sea.

○ The German-Polish War, which had begun on September 1, 1939, had developed into a European war since September 3, 1939, due to the declarations of war by England and France against Germany, which was initially fought as a so-called "sitting war", but in April 1940 pushed for a military solution.

○ On April 9, 1940, the Wehrmacht began Operation Weserübung, occupying Denmark and landing in Norway with the aim of pre-empting a British invasion of Norway and securing the continued supply of Swedish iron ore, which was vital to German industry.

○ This created a series of favourable foreign policy and military-strategic conditions for a possible intervention by the USSR in the European military conflict, for which, however, the Red Army was neither structurally nor armament-wise prepared at this point in time.

1 Speech by Stalin at a meeting of senior commanders of the Red Army on April 14, 1940 in evaluation of the Russo-Finnish War, (Russian); in: The Year 1941, Documents, Part II, p. 600. original document: RZXIDNI F.17 Op. 165, D.77, LI. 178-211. The consultation to evaluate the experiences of the war against Finland took place in the Kremlin on the advice of the Central Committee of the CP(B) from April 14 to 17, 1940. It was attended by army commanders, members of the war councils of the armies, corps and division commanders, as well as responsible employees of the People's Commissariat of Defense, the General Staff and representatives of the military districts and military academies. The unofficial shorthand transcript of Stalin's speech, with omissions in the text but with the style and spelling preserved, was typed on April 14, 1940, although a note on other documents dates the speech to April 17, 1940. It seems logical that Stalin gave his speech on April 17, 1940 as a summary and conclusion of the conference. It has not yet been possible to clarify the actual date of Stalin's speech. Stalin had not been adequately prepared and was not prepared in terms of the content of his agitation and propaganda ("MIR" (peace) was shouted from every house wall). The basic military plans of the USSR that were still valid in April 1940 confirmed the defensive order given to the Red Army in November 1937 to be ready to defend the USSR in the West and in the East.

The core statements of both the "Perspective Plan for the Development and Reorganization of the Red

Army in the Years 1938-1942" 1 and the "Mobilization Plan for the Years 1938-1939" 2 (MP 22), both adopted on 29 November 1937, as well as the "Operational Plan 1938" 3 of the Red Army of 24 March 1938 confirm this statement (see Chapter III, Mobilization)

In this military-historical situation, which is only briefly outlined with a few facts, Stalin spoke on April 14 (17), 1940 at a conference in evaluation of the Russo-Finnish War before senior commanders of the Red Army. The main points of his speech are excerpted below:

1. first, Stalin referred to the question of whether this war against Finland was necessarily declared. He placed the establishment of the security of Leningrad at the center of his justification. Stalin justified the inevitability of this war not only with the importance of Leningrad's armaments industry (30-35% of the country) or as the second capital of the USSR, but also with the statement that the conquest of Leningrad could lead to the formation of a "serious base" within the country and from there to the unleashing of a civil war against the Soviet power. Peaceful talks with Finland had not led to results, but the security of Leningrad, on which the fate of the country also depended, had to be secured unconditionally.

While public propaganda spoke of an allegedly acute threat to Leningrad, Stalin made no mention of such a threat from Finland at this internal evaluation, but only spoke of the prevention of future possibilities.

Obviously, the strategic goal was to create an apron and secure the northern flank of the future western theater of war. This clearly demonstrates the character of the war as a war of pure aggression.

2) Stalin gave an extremely revealing explanation of the reasons for the timing of the start of the war with Finland:

Quote II.1

"All this depended not only on us, but rather on the international situation. There in the West the three greatest powers are clutching each other's throats, when should the question of Leningrad be resolved, if not under these conditions, when our hands are busy and we are presented with a favorable situation to strike at this moment. It would be a great stupidity, political short-sightedness, to miss this moment and not try to raise and resolve the question of Leningrad's security more quickly, because the war in the West is still going on. That would be a big mistake. "

Stalin therefore needed a favorable international situation, which, as the example of the start of the war against Finland showed, he was willing to use rigorously.

3 Stalin tried to justify the expediency of the operational plan, which provided for the distribution of troops into five attack columns to split up the strategic front of the Finnish army, in extensive form. The enclosed map section (see Chapter I, Theater of War, Map 1.4) shows the directions of attack.

The deployment of the troops on the Karelian Isthmus, the largest of the attack groupings, pursued 1t. Stalin had three objectives:

"1. to create a serious defensive barrier against all possibilities and contingencies against Leningrad; 2. to organize reconnaissance of the territory and rear area of Finland; and 3. to create a deployment area (bridgehead - the author) where troops could be brought for a jump. "

The layout of the attack concept, which Stalin assessed in detail, suggests that it was not just about creating a zone to ensure the security of Leningrad. The attack columns in the north, e.g. in the direction of Pet- samo and in the middle of Finland in the direction of Kemi, Gulf of Bothnia, can only be justified with difficulty by the creation of a security zone for Leningrad. It also remains to be clarified by what right the reconnaissance of the territory of Finland and the rear area was to be organized and why a bridgehead "for a jump" was needed. Obviously, these measures already served to prepare for another planned war, the so-called "Continuation War", against Finland.

4 In an indelicate manner, Stalin presented the Finns with a choice between two alternatives - partial

or complete Sovietization.

Quote II.2

"At the beginning of the war we put two questions to the Finns – choose one out of two – either you agree to major concessions or we "atomize" you and you get the Kuusinen government, which will "eviscerate" your government. That's what we told the Finnish bourgeoisie. They thought it was better to make concessions so that there would be no people's government. Please. In order to settle the matter amicably, we agreed to these conditions, thus obtaining satisfactory and serious concessions which completely secured Leningrad from the north, south and west and which also put all the vital centers of Finland under threat. Now Helsinki is threatened from two sides – from Vyborg and from Hanko. " Doesn't that sound like political blackmail?

5 Stalin radically reckoned with the causes of the shortcomings that were revealed in the Russo-Finnish War and that prevented the Red Army from being a "modern army". As Stalin explained, at the beginning of the Russo-Finnish War there was a "lack of coordination" at all stages and he asked the question: "What did our troops fail to adapt to the conditions of the war in Finland?" Stalin believed it was the psychology developed among the troops and the commanding staff as a result of the previous Polish campaign, "throwing caps. "

And he continued:

Quote IL3

" The Polish campaign damaged us terribly, it spoiled us. Whole articles were written and speeches were made that our Red Army was invincible, that there was nothing like it, that it had everything, that there were no shortcomings, but that was not the case and it is not the case that our army is invincible. (...) In general, there has never been an invincible army in history. (...) This terribly developed psychology in our country that our army is invincible is a boast. It must be stopped. These are ignorant people, i.e., great boasters. "

The Red Army has never fought a modern war. Stalin described the localized battles in Manchuria, at Lake Khassan or in Mongolia as "small episodes", as "stupid stuff", he called the campaign against Poland a "walk in the park" and the civil war was "not a real war", as it was waged without artillery, without air forces, without tanks, without mine launchers.

The civil war "was a special war, not a modern one. We were poorly armed, poorly clothed, poorly fed, yet we defeated the enemy, who had many times more weapons, were many times better armed, here the spirit (of the troops – the author) played a major role. " But this led to commanders leading their regiment with "Hurrah" or quickly carrying out an attack without artillery preparation. "There is nothing modern about this. "

Stalin concluded that it was above all the "cult of traditions and the experience of the civil war" that prevented the commanders from conducting the war in Finland in a new way, from switching "to the track of modern war", to "new methods of modern war", including the production of new weapons.

6 Stalin then asked the question: "But what is a modern war, (...) what does it require?"

With regard to weaponry and combat technology, he answered it as follows:

1. a modern war required "masses of artillery". fWhoever wants to rebuild in a modern way must understand, artillery decides the fate of the war. "Even shells and cartridges cannot be spared if you want to smash the front edge of the defense or the enemy's rear area.

2. "Air forces, masses of air forces, not hundreds, but thousands (...)"

"(...) those who want to wage war in a modern way and win in a modern war cannot say that it is necessary to economize (...)"

3. "Next – tanks, also the decisive factor, masses of tanks are needed, not hundreds, but thousands. Tanks protected by armor – that's all. It is necessary (to crush the enemy – the author) to give more

shells and cartridges, this will save your own people and preserve the forces of the army. "

4. "Mine throwers, there is no modern war without mine throwers, mass mine throwers. All corps, all companies, battalions, regiments must have mine launchers, 6-barreled ones absolutely, 8-barreled ones (...) This is terribly necessary for modern war (...) If you want a war to cost us little blood, don't save on mines. " and

5. the automation of small arms fire.

7 Stalin also devoted great attention to adjusting the subjective factor of the Red Army to a modern war with the following demands:

"Further, creation of a cultured, qualified and educated body of commanders. We do not have such commanders, or there are only a few of them. " He must also be able to command the air forces, artillery, tanks, armored brigades, mine launchers, but if he has no general idea about these types of weapons, what instructions can he give? But he was not the general commander of troops in the old civil war era. Only then would he have authority.

"Next. Well-organized and skillfully working staffs are required. The staff, the organ that develops orders and fills them. Modern war demands the e. "

"That's why a modern war requires well-trained, disciplined fighters with plenty of initiative. Our fighter does not have enough initiative. He is not very individually developed. He is poorly trained (...) We need a new fighter. It is necessary and possible to create one: full of initiative, individually developed, disciplined."

"For modern warfare, we need politically steadfast political workers who are masters of the military cause. It is not enough for political workers to say the words - the party of Lenin - Stalin - as well as - hallelujah, hallelujah - repeatedly. "

Stalin meant that these were the conditions required to wage a modern war and to be victorious in that war.

These literal translations, despite some omissions in the text of the stenogram, show the clarity and decisiveness of Stalin's demands for a modernly equipped, powerful army capable of attack with an all-round educated command, capable staffs, well-trained, disciplined and initiative-rich fighters and political workers with high steadfastness.

8 Stalin went on to ask whether the Red Army had been such a modern army when it entered the war with Finland? And he answered: "No, it was not." In any case, the Red Army was shot at and received its baptism of fire in Finland. Despite all its shortcomings, however, the Red Army became stronger over the course of the war and emerged from it as an almost modern army. The experience gained on the fields of Finland was a plus. However, he also pointed out: "It was good that our army had the opportunity to gain this experience not from the German air forces, but with God's help in Finland. "

9 Stalin went on to address the question "Is the Finnish army a modern army?" and answered it as follows: 'from the point of view of defending the fortified lines, it, the Finnish army, is more or less satisfactory, but it is not modern as such, because it is very passive in its defense and looks to the line of defense of the fortified area as the Mohammedan looks to Allah. "

In the course of the three months of fighting, there was not a single case of a serious mass attack by the Finnish army, and it only launched very few counterattacks and then fell back with heavy losses. "That is the main deficiency of the Finnish army. It is not created and trained for attack, but for defense, and defense is not active, but passive. Defense with a deep fetishistic belief, with a belief in an invulnerable line. I cannot call such an army modern." And he continued: "An army that is not educated for attack, but for passive defense; an army that has no serious artillery; an army that has no serious air force, although it has all the possibilities for it; an army that conducts good partisan attacks - goes into the rear, sets up barriers and more - I cannot call such an army an army. "

At the end of his remarks, Stalin drew a very interesting conclusion:

Quote II.4

"If you ask, who did we defeat? Well, of course, we defeated the Finns. But that is not the most important thing in this war. " And he went on to explain: 'jWe not only defeated the Finns, we also defeated their masters, we defeated the German defense technique, we defeated the English defense technique, we defeated the French defense technique. We not only defeated the Finns, but also the technology of the most advanced countries in Europe. Not only the technology of the most advanced states in Europe, we defeated their tactics, their strategy. (...) That is the most important part of our victory. "

(stormy applause, all the generals and officers stood up and shouted "Hurray")

Let us take a brief look at the foreign policy, strategic-conceptual and armaments-related steps taken by the USSR's top political and military leadership following Stalin's speech:

O The resumption of talks with England, such as holding talks on an economic agreement from as early as April 1940, demonstrates Stalin's interest in turning to England and improving relations, which were at "freezing point". When, for example, the newly appointed British ambassador Stafford Cripps handed a letter from Churchill to Molotov at 5 p.m. on July 1, 1940 with the aim of using the "obvious Soviet concern about the consequences of complete German victory" in France to achieve a turnaround in Soviet policy as the "only chance" for England, he was received by Stalin for talks at 6.30 p.m. on the same day. Just two days later, on July 3 and 4, 1940, Churchill invited the USSR's ambassador to Great Britain, I. M. Maiski, to meet with him.⁴

O By continuing the policy of locally limited expansive actions to secure the flanks of the planned theater of war through the military occupation of the Baltic states on June 15–17, 1940 (referred to in documents of the Russian State Military Archives as the "Baltic Campaign"), Stalin secured access to the central Baltic Sea and by annexing Bessarabia and northern Bukovina on June 28, 1940, the strategic deployment area in the south/southwest direction was expanded to secure the southern flank. An East Prussian campaign was also prepared.

O In accordance with his speech, Stalin immediately increased his efforts to expand the offensive capability of the Red Army (examples) (see also the following chapters):

- End of May 1940, Stalin's directive to regroup the armoured forces in the form of the formation of 8 Mechanized Corps (2 armoured divisions and 1 mechanized rifle division each), which were fully replenished, at least in terms of personnel, as early as 01 October 1940; the replenishment with tanks approached the wartime strength of 888 tanks per Mechanized Corps.

- From June to fall 1940, perfection of the command structures through the formation of a further 7 army staffs (the 7th, 8th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th and 26th Armies);⁵

- Mid-1940, renewed partial mobilization with the call-up of 766,000 reservists in preparation for an East Prussian campaign, disguised as "major training exercises";

- July 04, 1940, increase in the number of units to be formed after the declaration of mobilization in the first year of the war by a further 30 divisions;

- July 6, 1940, start of the deployment of the Red Army in the western border military districts; ensuring structural changes and creating the conditions for the mass introduction of rifle divisions into the Baltic states, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina by increasing the peacetime strength of the Red Army to 3,461,200 army personnel;

- 25 July 1940, introduction of new organizational structures of the air forces, consisting of 38 air divisions with a total of 163 air squadrons and a large number of new formations; the command of the new air divisions had already been formed by 30 September 1940.

- In the months of June/July 1940, the de facto mobilization of the USSR's heavy industry and

armaments industry was initiated.

On June 27, 1940, the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR came into force, which stipulated the transition to the 8-hour working day, the 7-day working week and the ban on the unauthorized departure of workers and employees from factories and institutions. 6

With the resolution "On the preparation of mobilization plans for the years 1940 and 1941" for industry dated 5 July 1940, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR virtually suspended the plan of current military deliveries of armaments for 1940 and instructed the Defence Committee to submit further additional orders for the main types of armaments for the remainder of 1940 within one month.⁷ As the orders placed with industry in June/July 1940 show, the USSR's armaments industry literally exploded.

In June 1940, for example, an order was placed to produce another 600 T-34 tanks in the second half of 1940.⁸

O Expansion of the military infrastructure of the planned western theater of war

On July 12, 1940, the People's Commissar of Defence reported to Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov the most important immediate measures to improve the infrastructure of the planned western theater of war, in particular to increase the passability of the railroads in the west and southwest in the western regions of Belarus and the Ukraine. Measures to improve the railroads in Bessarabia and Bukovina, which had only been occupied on June 28, 1940, were also included in the report. The report focused on the construction of new lines and secondary tracks, the construction of unloading ramps, communications links and railroad supply points.⁹

O The operational plans of the General Staff of the Red Army were transformed from planning strategic defensive operations to the conduct of a possible strategic offensive. Already the draft operational plan, dated no later than August 19, 1940, clearly set offensive tasks for the actions of the fronts in the main directions of the western theater of war. While in this draft the Red Army troops were still given the main task of capturing East Prussia and destroying the concentrations of German troops, the strategic offensive intention became even more obvious with the operational plan of September 18, 1940, which was reported to Stalin and Molotov; the command of the main battle of the south-western front up to the upper reaches of the Oder was significantly deepened and linked to the geostrategic objective of separating Germany from the Balkan states. 11

The message from the People's Commissar of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to Stalin and Molotov, no earlier than 5 October 1940, after receiving criticism of the operational plan presented in September, specified the planning and execution of an offensive in the main south-west direction with great clarity. 12

O With the aim of completely securing the northern flank of the planned theater of war, the operational plan of 18 September 1940 for the continuation of the war against Finland was drawn up under the pretext that Finland had halted the demobilization of its army, which had begun at the end of the Winter War, and had called up further cohorts of reservists for training exercises. 13

In the talks held in Berlin on November 12-13, 1940, however, Stalin's plan for the USSR to wage another war against Finland was strictly rejected by Hitler. Unimpressed by this, the People's Commissar of Defence issued a directive to the Leningrad Military District on November 25, 1940, in preparation for this second war to create two fronts directed against Finland.¹⁴

Conclusions from Chapter II,

Setting the course for the preparation of offensive actions

1 The change in Stalin's strategic conception

With this speech, Stalin introduced a new phase of his long-term strategy, a geostrategic conception consisting of continuity and change.

While, on the one hand, Stalin continued to pursue a military policy of small steps and expansion-oriented local campaigns to expand the strategic deployment area and secure the flanks of the future theater of war, all the foreign policy, armaments, military conceptual and infrastructural measures introduced after his speech of April 14 (17), 1940 reveal the intention of an energetic change in the direction of planned offensive actions on a large scale in the western theater of war. Only a few examples (see above) could be selected here from the abundance of measures demonstrating this reorientation of the strategic concept, the turn towards preparing offensive action on a large scale. (These statements will be discussed in detail in the following chapters).

2 The contradiction between will and ability

Stalin made it very clear that there was still a contradiction between his intention to wage a major offensive war using the favorable foreign policy and military conditions that were developing as a result of the expansion of the European war, on the one hand, and his ability to wage this war given that the Red Army was not yet structured and equipped to do so, on the other.

After all, Stalin already seemed to have clearly recognized at the time of his speech that, since the hot phase of the war between Germany and France was still to come and Germany's air and naval war with Great Britain was expanding, the hour of his military intervention in this war would come. Stalin's view on this problem - "We will be the last to intervene, but when we do, we will bring the decisive weight to bear" - is well known.

3 Stalin's demands for the establishment of offensive capability

With the basic content of his speech - "Only an attacking army is a modern army" - Stalin made those demands on the Red Army that would enable it to act as an offensive instrument, thus initiating a new phase in the long-term preparation of the Red Army, without, however, being able to enter the immediate war preparation stage for the extreme enlargement of the army (only from around January/February 1941). This phase thus represents a decisive basis when considering the historical events in the run-up to the German-Russian War of 1941. As the subsequent decisions, directives and orders of the highest political and military leadership as well as all the activities initiated by the General Staff of the Red Army show, this phase was to take at least a year. The specific timing of the offensive had to be favorable, as Stalin himself had explained, and result from the development of the military-political situation, the further course of the war. The measures subsequently introduced to equip and re-equip the Red Army and develop it into an offensive instrument were the exact implementation of the demands outlined here by Stalin.

4. directed against Germany

This was a programmatic speech that was very clearly directed exclusively against Germany. This obvious thought is by no means speculative. Who else would the thousands of modern tanks and aircraft he demanded go on the offensive against, or as Stalin described it, attack? Against France or even England? Although a certain amount of respect was expressed for the German air force, there was talk of victory over German defense technology, tactics and strategy, probably with the aim of spreading optimism. According to the content of the lecture, Stalin was here setting out the planned entry into the war against Germany. Stalin also gave indications as to the time frame, as long as "the three largest powers are clutching each other's throats in the West." The naming of Germany as the main enemy in all of the Red Army's operational plans proves this statement.

There were also fatal parallels between the way in which Stalin himself opened the war against Finland in connection with blackmail and Molotov's appearance during the talks in Berlin on November 12-13, 1940 and his presumptuous demands to add Finland, the Balkan states of Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece, but also Turkey and Iran, the Danube, and even the Great and Little Belt, the Öresund, Kattegatt and Skagerrak as well as Spitzbergen to the USSR's sphere of interest. 15

Concluding remarks

In Stalin's well-known and regularly used speech to graduates of the military academies on May 5, 1941, he stated: "But now that we have reconstructed our army, provided it with sufficient technology for modern combat, now that we have become stronger, it is necessary to move from defense to attack (...) To move from defense to the military policy of offensive action (...) The Red Army is a modern army, but a modern army is an attacking army."16

While these statements of May 5, 1941 must be seen as a certain end point in the development of the Red Army into an offensive instrument, Stalin's programmatic speech of April 14 (17), 1940 represents the starting point of this development, made public at least for the closest circle of higher commanders of the Red Army. The defensive mission of the Red Army before his speech (apart from the "minor episodes" and the "walk" mentioned by Stalin (see above)) and the development of the armed forces and all areas of society in the USSR after this speech substantiate this statement.

The fact that the turning point towards concrete preparations for aggression by the Red Army began with Stalin's speech evaluating the Russo-Finnish war on April 14 (17), 1940, is also confirmed by statements made by responsible contemporary military officers.

Thus, on December 31, 1940, the People's Commissar of Defense, Timoshenko, in his concluding speech at the advanced training course of leading cadres of the Red Army, confirmed the date of the massive beginning of the rebuilding of the Red Army in the spring/early summer of 1940.

Quote IL5

"We are beginning to create new foundations, new prerequisites for the further growth of our Red Army, we are deepening and broadening that reconstruction in the Red Army which was realized six months ago on the directive of Comrade Stalin. "

Even in 1969, Colonel General Sakharov confirmed this date.

Quote IL6

"In the spring of 1940, on all these lines (Colonel-General Sakharov mentioned the areas of training of troops, the quality of combat technology and armament, the structure of the various branches of the armed forces – the author), work began on a broad front, according to plan and at a convincing pace. "

Chapter III

The mobilization of the Red Army

The "Great Training Exercises" – a prerequisite for leading an offensive in the initial period of the planned war

1 The theoretical foundations of the mobilization of the Red Army

Determining the nature of a future war and its initial period was considered to be the decisive basis for determining the way of organizing the mobilization of the Red Army. In contrast to the German concept of a "blitzkrieg", Soviet military science developed the theory of the protracted and tense character of a future war that had started unexpectedly as a war of exhaustion. Mobilization had to be organized accordingly.

In order to successfully seize the strategic initiative in the initial period of a war at that time, four complexes were of fundamental importance:

1. the establishment of powerful and offensive-capable force structures already in peacetime, primarily replenished mechanized troops (armoured troops, artillery, airborne forces, airborne troops, air defence) as well as the creation of easily replenishable formations (rifle troops, rear services) with minimal mobilization7partial mobilization expenditure and a corresponding iron stock of material resources;

2. the creation of all prerequisites for the covered replenishment of the armed forces to almost war strength, i.e. for a covered partial mobilization still in peacetime;

3. the development of such an infrastructure in the planned theater of war that ensured the possibility of both the planned execution of all mobilization/partial mobilization transports and the early and rapid concentration and deployment of the attack groups, and of course

4. such an extent of mobilization, strategic and state reserves that not only secured the initial period of the war, but also ensured its continuation in accordance with the predicted long-lasting nature of the war.

Since the subject of this chapter is the close connection between the development of the peacetime strength of the Red Army, its replenishments and structures, in particular those of the rifle troops, and the mobilization organization, with special attention to the partial mobilizations, only a few key points will be presented on the state of development of the infrastructure of the western theater of war of the USSR (cf. Chapter I, Theatre of War), which is essentially connected to mobilization:

○ The vast distances of the Soviet Union seriously delayed the implementation of mobilization measures. While draftees in France, Austria-Hungary or Germany had to travel an average of 210 to 320 km to their place of posting before the start of the First World War, in Russia the distance was around 960 to 1060 km for draftees from the depths of the country.

○ The low density of the railroad network in the European part of the USSR reduced the capacity of the rail network to about one third of the Central European countries.

As shown in Chapter I, Theaters of War, the condition of the railroad network in the conquered territories of western Ukraine and western Belarus had not changed significantly by 1940 and, despite enormous efforts to expand the railroad lines, could not be fully restored by 1941, partly due to the conversion of the railroad lines from European dimensions to the wider Russian rail gauge.

In addition, the road and trail system was not sufficiently developed, including river crossings and bridges whose load-bearing capacity often did not allow the passage of heavy vehicles, e.g. medium and heavy tanks.

In view of these infrastructural conditions in the western theater of war, which are only briefly outlined here, and a conventional mobilization period for the USSR of 30 to 42 days, even if the Red Army were to exercise the strategic initiative, the deployment would come too late for an offensive, especially since, as the General Staff of the Red Army stated in its operational plan of 15 May 1941, Germany already had its army in a mobilized state.

First of all, a brief definition of mobilization:

Mobilization is the conversion of a country and its armed forces to the requirements of war. The core of mobilization is the transfer of the armed forces from peacetime to wartime strength. This includes the personnel and material replenishment of all existing units and formations to the wartime structure, the formation of new units, formations and formations that did not exist in peacetime, including replacement troops, and the formation of operational command authorities in accordance with the planned wartime organization of the armed forces. 17

And this process takes time, a lot of time. A general and open mobilization of the army cannot remain hidden from the potential enemy and the entire world public. However, the organization and speed with which mobilization measures are carried out and the concentration of troops has a decisive influence at least on the course of hostilities in the initial period of a war and is of paramount importance if a surprising offensive is to be launched.

So let's take a look at the findings of Soviet military science regarding the mobilization of the Red Army in the period between the world wars.

The General Staff of the Red Army gained important insights by evaluating the results of the mobilization of the tsarist army in the run-up to the First World War at the end of July 1914.

At that time, there were "two types of mobilization in Russia: a "secret" and an orderly, "official" one,

the former apparently in two subtypes, with or without reservist conscription. The "secret" one preceded the "official" one.

On 2 March 1913, for example, the Tsar confirmed the regulation on a secret "war preparation period" to speed up the mobilization of the Russian army, which served the purpose of anticipating the enemy's opening of hostilities.

The "war preparation period" was divided into two successive sections, the essential content of which was defined as follows

- the call-up of reserve teams to border corps exercises and manoeuvres in compliance with the "mobilization plan"-,

- the completion of the war readiness of the border troops and the full war strength of the "front troops" without ordering general mobilization;

- securing the borders, transportation routes, telegraph lines and all installations of military importance;
- the relocation of military hospitals, the "deportation of the families of military personnel", the "issue of war cards to the troops",

- the "intensive increase in the officer corps" through the "premature appointment of junior officers as officers" etc.

"The "big manoeuvres" were part of the cover-up for the "pre-mobilization" that had been diligently pursued in the preceding months.¹⁸

The implementation of the "war preparation period" by the tsar in the run-up to the outbreak of World War I on July 26, 1914 is documented. Its substantive measures were triggered by a series of individual orders and served directly to prepare for general mobilization.

Partial mobilization as one of the types of mobilization was also already in use. The officially admitted Russian partial mobilization of the four south-western military districts of Odessa, Kiev, Moscow and Kazan, a very extensive area with 86 million inhabitants, with 55 infantry divisions and 8 1/2 cavalry divisions, was allegedly only initiated on 29 July 1914.

Naturally, the strictest secrecy was maintained even then.

"Russia's military measures would have to be disguised by skillful diplomatic negotiations in order to allay the fears of the enemy as much as possible. "2

The above-mentioned measures gave Russia a head start of around a week in terms of mobilizing its troops.

This gain in time, achieved through the "war preparation period", ensured that the Russians were ready for operations almost simultaneously with the French, despite the most difficult transport conditions.

("The French went on the offensive with the 1st and 2nd armies on August 14, and with the 3rd, 4th and 5th armies on August 21. The Russians crossed the East Prussian border with the Njemen Army on August 17, with the Narew Army on August 21, on the southern front the East Galician border on August 20. ") 2

On July 31, 1914, only the secret partial mobilization was transferred to the general mobilization by a supplementary mobilization.

With the aim of creating an organization of mobilization corresponding to the character of the future war and gaining time with the opening of the war, the planning of mobilization and its effect on the course of the first operations was an important part of the studies of the General Staff of the Red Army and the military-historical works of Soviet military science in the thirties and forties of the last century. The following examples may prove this statement:

Svechin, Isserson and Shaposhnikov were already concerned with the foundations of the mobilization of the Red Army. Based on the character of a future war as a long-lasting battle of exhaustion waged with great tension, they came to the conclusion that this also determined the character of mobilization to a

decisive degree and that it was not possible without sufficient strategic mobilization reserves. Shaposhnikov thus came to the conclusion that a long-lasting war required a phased character of mobilization. Isserson also agreed with the idea of staggered and uninterrupted (permanent) mobilization, the gradual layering of efforts in battle. He emphasized that no country entering into a long struggle could reduce its efforts only to the first echelon of its mobilized cadre army. Nor was any country in a position to simultaneously concentrate all the forces it was capable of mobilizing in open combat operations. He wrote "Behind the first line of the army follow the forces of the second and third lines, conditioning the entry of the army into the war with deep strategic echelons."19

M. N. Tukhachevsky, probably one of the most decisive masterminds in the development of the military theory and practice of the Red Army until his execution, evaluated the experiences published by Ludendorff and von Seeckt in the analysis of the First World War in the mobilization and concentration of the army as well as the first steps towards the formation of the Wehrmacht after 1933 and prepared a manuscript, which he presented to Stalin on 25 March 1935.

As Tukhachevsky explained, Ludendorff was very dissatisfied with the pace of the first period of the war in 1914, as the mobilization and concentration of troops was delayed until the 16th day of mobilization.

Von Seeckt called it 1t. Tukhachevsky called it the aim of the strategy to create mobile forces that were highly qualified and capable of carrying out operations at an early stage. For this reason, von Seeckt demanded that even in peacetime, divisions should be filled to the maximum and ready for combat in accordance with the staffing plan in order to achieve a rapid concentration of troops in advance of the enemy, which would not be delayed by any significant replenishments/additions to the formations and troop units. Thus, according to von Seeckt, the introduction of universal conscription was essential for the development of the country's powerful defense capability.20

This manuscript by Tukhachevsky was personally corrected and supplemented by Stalin and, as further developments show, formed one of the foundations of the planned expansion of the Red Army in the area of mobilization.

In the fall of 1939, the military-historical department of the General Staff of the Red Army also began its military-historical studies to analyze the recent wars and the beginning of World War II. World War II. In the three-volume edition "The History of Wars and the Art of War" (Russian) presented by this department, great attention was paid to the elaboration of views and forecasts on the nature of future military conflicts.

The authors noted that, in contrast to the First World War, which was analyzed in detail, the capitalist states would not be able to fight in the future. World War I, which was analyzed in detail, in order to ensure the strategic surprise of an attack, the capitalist states had gone over to gradually establishing the war readiness of the armed forces without declaring general mobilization under the aspect of various reserve exercises, alert training and practice mobilizations or covered partial mobilizations. The lessons of the events of 1938 had shown that the mobilization of modern capitalist armies would be covered and carried out very quickly. During the period of the division of Czechoslovakia, a large number of units were mobilized by the German and Polish armies under the pretext of reserve training, and in Germany also under the pretext of training camps of fascist organizations.

The suddenness of the attack, the authors went on to note, was one of the characteristic and striking features of Germany's doctrine of attacking the enemy with unexpected blows from huge motorized shock armies and air forces, thwarting his mobilization and thus ensuring the deployment of its own mobilized armies.21

On the basis of these and other findings and experiences, including those from local campaigns, the following essential military-scientific views emerged to perfect the theory and practice of the Red

Army's mobilization readiness in the 1940s:

1. characteristic feature of modern war is the sudden surprise attack without any declaration of war. The exchange of diplomatic notes and talks of the past is replaced by sudden strikes by the air forces and mechanized troops (shock armies) with the aim of destroying the first echelon of the enemy's troops, disorganizing the mobilization of his armed forces and destroying vital centers of his power at an early stage.

2) This requires the availability of the armed forces necessary for the first surprise operations in the scope of the troops of the first and possibly the second strategic echelons with a high level of combat readiness, warlike divisions, a warlike level of replenishment and equipment and minimal mobilization effort already in peacetime, thus initially without the need for the time-consuming reorganization of units and formations for the first surprise strike of the war.

3. the residual replenishment of the armed forces to a personnel level close to war strength is carried out in disguise and very quickly without announcing general mobilization under the pretext of exercises, manoeuvres, reservist training and courses as a covered partial mobilization in a secret "war preparation period", possibly initially limited to the military districts of the respective planned theater of war, while at the same time preparing for the triggering of general mobilization, which, however, is not proclaimed until the start of hostilities.

4. in view of the prolonged intensive nature of the war and the need to introduce further strategic echelons into the battle, a deep staggering of all mobilization measures is necessary, which is supported by the subsequent transfer to permanent mobilization with the aim of the

This is achieved by the subsequent transfer to permanent mobilization with the aim of reorganizing units and formations and providing the necessary personnel and material replacements on the basis of strategic mobilization and state reserves.

As the decisions, directives and instructions of the highest political leadership of the USSR and the People's Commissar of Defense on improving the mobilization readiness of the Red Army prove, these views were incorporated into political and military practice. And they were personally confirmed by Stalin (see Tukhachevsky's manuscript) or ordered, confirmed or significantly influenced by him and his political leadership committees in the form of all mobilization plans, resolutions and directives, which generally bore his signature.

Mobilizations have a long tradition in the Red Army. Just two years after the end of the civil war in the USSR, the Red Army was mobilized to provide military support for the revolution in Germany. At that time, there was no mobilization plan at all, as the Chief of Staff of the Red Army reported to the Revolutionary Military Council in April 1923.²²

Let us therefore take a closer look at the development of the Red Army and the forms and methods of its mobilization.

After a detailed analysis of the known decisions and directives of the USSR's top political and military leadership as well as the above-mentioned military-scientific foundations, the staggered development of the organization of the Red Army's mobilization can be divided into three stages:

1st stage - The stage of continuous growth and perfection of all foundations (until January/February 1941) - a long-term strategy ²³

Stage 2 - The stage of extreme growth and partial mobilization directed against Germany; the war preparation period; (January/February 1941 to June 1941)

Stage 3 - The stage of the declaration of general and open mobilization with the opening of the offensive (supplementary mobilization) and its subsequent transition to permanent mobilization (planned for around the first decade of July 1941)

Although the general and open mobilization of the USSR was not triggered in the run-up to the

German-Soviet War, the development of the Red Army in the last years before the war certainly corresponded to a staggered mobilization in small steps. A number of features that were generally only assigned to one mobilization and were already implemented in peacetime, in particular with the decision on Mobilization Plan 41, substantiate this statement.

Such features included

- the production of the wartime divisions of the Red Army, which ruled out the need to reorganize formations before the start of an offensive as part of a general mobilization;

- the systematic reduction of the number of personnel called up in the event of mobilization by steadily increasing personnel strength and bringing it closer to the wartime strength of the Red Army even in peacetime;

- the formation of field command bodies corresponding to the war structures;

- the replenishment of the mechanized corps despite a number of missing tanks and artillery personnel to almost 100 % and the rifle divisions close to the wartime replenishments as part of a partial mobilization (the so-called "large training exercises");

- the concentration of replenishments in the context of partial mobilization and in the deployment of new structural elements on the border military districts, in particular on the troops planned for action in the main directions southwest and west.

The following Table III.1 shows the number of divisions planned in the event of the deployment of the Red Army, the total number of which reached 303 divisions before the start of the war in June 1941, despite a number of replenishment and equipment deficiencies, without having triggered mobilization.

Table III.1

Mobilization plans/specifications of:

1935 November 29, 1937

MP35 MP22

February 12, 1941 MP 41

April 23, 1941 (specification of MP 41)

Total number of planned divisions

138 222

314

303

This contradicts the argument that the Red Army could not have deployed properly because mobilization had not yet been triggered.

2. the 1st stage (until January/February 1941) - a long-term strategy

Stage of continuous growth and the perfection of all foundations

The year 1937

The peacetime strength of the Red Army in 1937 was approx. 1,200,000 army personnel (22.6 % of the wartime strength) and the wartime strength after mobilization (land and air forces, naval fleet and rear services) was 1t. Mobilization Plan 35 was planned with 5,300,000 AA. There was thus a mobilization expenditure of 4,100,000 reservists (77.4% of the war strength).

In the autumn of 1937, the "Perspective Plan for the Development and Reorganization of the Red Army in the Years 1938-1942" was drawn up and presented to the leadership of the party and the army on ZI. It was presented to the leadership of the party and government on November 29, 1937 and confirmed on November 29, 1937.

According to Sakharov, M.V., the demands of the party and government on the Red Army were "to be

able to repel an attack by the enemy simultaneously in the West and in the East and to carry the battle into the territory of the enemy. "

Key figures on the development of peacetime strength on the basis of the Perspective Plan are shown in the following table:

Table III.2

As of January 01, 1938

Planned development in the years 1938 to the end of 1942

Planned

Increase/reduction in %

Rifle squads

Rifle Corps

25

25

0

Rifle divisions

96

96

0

Number of AA

636.940

744.569

16,9

(of which fortified rooms)

20.940

25.670

22,6

Armored troops

Command of Pz.-/ Meeh. Corps

4

4

0

Armored brigades

32

29

25 (by

armored regiments

-

11

deployment of the 11 PzRgt.)

Tanks

4.950

9.572

93,4

Number of AA

90.880

95.866

5,5

Cavalry

Number of AA

195.690

138.560

-29,2

Artillery d. Reserve d. High Command

Number of AA

34.160

43.160

26,4

Air defense

Number of AA

45.280

72.081

59,2

Fighter aircraft of the LV of the centers

569

1.323

132,5

Air forces

Aviation brigades

77

150 (at the end of 1941)

94,8

Number of AA

193.970

215.062

10,9

Aircraft

9.385

9.726

3,6

Rear services

Number of AA

87.610

78.782

-10,1

Number of AA in the Red Army

Peacetime strength

1.605.520

1.780.000

10,8

The People's Commissar for Defense, K. Voroshilov, justified the development of the perspective plan

1. the "necessity of strengthening the striking power and operational maneuverability of the Red Army" and

2. with the "mobilization of the Red Army in line depending on the accumulation of material resources 24 25 26

On the basis of the "Perspective Plan for the Development and Reorganization of the Red Army in the Years 1938-1942", the "Mobilization Plan for the Years 1938-1939" with the designation "Mobilization Plan 22" was confirmed on 29 November 1937 by the Defence Committee of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR.

The mobilization plan of the armed forces regulates the planned and timely transition of the army from the peacetime organization and staffing plan to the wartime one.

From this point of view, Mobilization Plan 22 stipulated that the armed forces were to be deployed in wartime in 1938/1939:

Table IIL3

Land forces

Rifle divisions

170

Corps artillery regiments

57

Cavalry divisions

29

Reserve artillery regiments

43

Light armored brigades

27

of the High Command

Heavy armored brigades

4

Independent artillery divisions large

8

Armored brigades

3

Range

Motorized rifle brigades

Air forces

Airborne brigades of all types (incl.

naval forces)

4

155

Chemical brigades

3

While the current mobilization plan 35 still provided for 150 rifle divisions in the event of war, 170 rifle divisions were now to be deployed, 138 of them in the west and 32 in the east. 96 divisions were planned as triple deployments.

The manpower plan and material and technical equipment plan for the state of war in 1938/1939 thus came into force with the following key figures: Table III.4

War strength of the Red Army 1938–1939

Civilian personnel

Horses

6.503.500

78.217

1.375.300

Tanks (of which T-38 – 3,200)

Aircraft (of which heavy TB-3 and DB-3 – 2220)

Guns

Motor vehicles

Tractors

15.613

11.000

15.218

305.780

76.560

Mobilization Plan 22 provided for the formation of the following units in the first year of the war:

Table III.5

2nd order formations

Rifle divisions

Aviation brigades

Artillery regiments of the High Command Reserve

Chemical Brigade

30

80

4

1

11

In addition, a railroad construction corps with a strength of 54,000 soldiers was planned outside the norm.⁹

The following table shows a comparison of the strengths planned in the years 1938–1939 according to Mobilization Plan 22 in wartime with the Mobilization Plan still valid in 1937:

Table III.6

Type of weapon

Planned according to the old mobilization plan 1935 to 1937

Planned according to Mobilization Plan No. 22 for 1938-1939

Planned

Increase/reduction in %

Rifle squads

n.a.

3.906.300

-

of which fortified rooms

69.000

161.000

133.3

Number of rifle divisions

150

170

13,3

Armored troops

153.200

208.700

36,2

Armored brigades

40

32

- 20 (temporary)

Tanks

11.300

15.613

38,2

Cavalry

Cavalry divisions

27

25

-7,4

Artillery

109.200

176.500

61,6

Artillery

13.054

15.218

16,6

Motor vehicle troops

69.000
 188.100
 172,6
 Motor vehicles
 n.a.
 305.780
 -
 Air defense
 142.100
 277.400
 95,2
 Air forces AA
 340.900
 384.300
 12,7
 Aircraft
 n.a.
 11.000
 -
 Rear services
 677.800
 186.800
 -72,4
 Total Red Army
 5.300.000
 6.503.500
 22,7

A detailed evaluation of the 1938-1942 Perspective Plan of the quantitative and qualitative development of the Red Army and the mobilization plan for the years 1938-1939 drawn up on this basis leads to the following conclusion:

1. the main content of both the Perspective Plan 1938-1942 and the Mobilization Plan 22 is to ensure the defensive mission of the Red Army with a focus on the West, but also to perfect the defence in the Far East. Over the course of approximately 5 years, the peacetime strength of the Red Army was to increase by only 10.8 %. The number of rifle corps was to remain at 25 until 1942 and the number of rifle divisions in the peacetime structure at 96.

A noteworthy development was planned for the more defensive branches of the armed forces, such as the increase in the number of AA in the fortified areas by 22.6 ‰, in the case of mobilization even by 133.3 ‰, the significant increase in the number of AA in air defence by 59.2 ‰, including the increase in the number of fighter aircraft to cover the country's most important political and economic centers by 132.5 ‰.

2. despite the defensive mission of the Red Army, work was carried out with extraordinary determination on the comprehensive creation of the foundations for a modern offensive-capable army. This included:

- the modernization of the Red Army, primarily through motorization and mechanization;
- the increased equipment with tanks and aircraft;

○ increasing the striking power of the rifle divisions by setting up a second artillery regiment for each rifle division;

○ the abolition of the territorial principle of mobilization. This was intended to prevent the formation of purely national units and to increase their reliability in action by composing the troops according to extraterritorial characteristics.

○ the continuous, albeit limited, increase in the peacetime strength of the Red Army and

○ the continued reduction of the cavalry and rear services with simultaneous motorization of the rear services.

3. characteristic of the entire planning in 1937, both for the Red Army's 1938-1942 Perspective Plan and for the 1938-1939 Mobilization Plan, is the consideration of the still limited economic possibilities of the USSR's armaments industry.

Thus, in view of insufficient material security, it was decided, for a limited period until January 1, 1939, that 79 rifle divisions "...due to the lack of security of the material part..." initially with only one artillery regiment and one heavy howitzer division instead of two artillery regiments.

The second artillery regiments of the rifle divisions were to be equipped "... according to the arrival of the industry".

Of the total of 40 planned armored brigades, it was also planned that in 1938, due to "...lack of material...", only 29 armored brigades and 11 armored regiments were to be kept in the peacetime inventory. Such formulations as "... depending on the accumulation of material resources..." can be found several times in the above-mentioned plans.

M.V. Sakharov also had to admit: "The total increase in the size of the Red Army in accordance with Mobilization Plan 22, including the planned formations of the second order during the first year of the war, was calculated on the basis of the 1938-1942 Perspective Plan and coordinated with the State Plan, depending on the receipt of armaments, combat technology and equipment."28

For these reasons, structural improvements and increases in the strength of the Red Army were only planned within the framework of the production possibilities for armaments, combat technology and equipment and thus a fairly moderate quantitative increase was planned. The General Staff also kept the personnel strength of the Red Army relatively low in the interests of deploying manpower in heavy industry and armaments.

4 While the peacetime strength of the Red Army was only to increase by 173,480 AA to 1,780,000 AA in the planning period up to the end of 1942, i.e. over the course of approximately five years, it was planned to significantly strengthen the Red Army by 1,203,500 AA to 6,503,500 AA in the event of war according to Mobilization Plan 22.

Thus, according to the figures of the Perspective and Mobilization Plan, 4,723,500 reservists and non-servicemen, i.e. 75.4 % of the planned wartime strength of the Red Army, would still have had to be mobilized in the event of war, even in 1938. The planned strength of 170 rifle divisions in the event of war, with a peacetime strength of 96 divisions, also required the formation of a further 74 divisions, i.e. certainly the triggering of general mobilization before a first strike, which would by no means have remained hidden from the world public.

According to this plan, the number of troops stationed in the East after the mobilization was carried out would amount to 1,411,700 AA.

These plans thus clearly confirm the political defensive mission given to the Red Army for the years 1938/1939 to be ready to defend the USSR both in the West and in the East.

From the contents of the perspective plan for the development of the Red Army, extending to the year 1942, as well as the mobilization plan 22 for the years 1938/1939, a mission to develop the Red Army into an offensive-capable army with an aggressive mission is not recognizable, undoubtedly in

implementation of the political guidelines. The Red Army of those years was not in a position to achieve a strategic surprise.

However, the planned decisive increase in the number of tanks, the expansion of the level of motorization of the rear services, the structural improvement of the air forces and the conversion of the rifle troops to the cadre system as well as their equipment with a second artillery regiment per rifle division suggest that the further systematic and long-term expansion of the structural and armament foundations for a formidable army was planned through the qualitative improvement of the Red Army, initially without a significant increase in numbers.

The General Staff's operational plan of March 24, 1938, which translated the political objective at the time of being ready to defend the USSR in both the East and the West into planning documents for the actions of the Red Army, also testifies to an active defensive strategy in these years.²⁹

The year 1938

On the basis of the perspective plan for the years 1938 to 1942, the peacetime strength of the Red Army in 1938 was to increase to 1,606,520 AA (24.7 % of the wartime strength) and the wartime strength after mobilization to 6,503,500 AA.

Taking into account the transition to the squad principle of replenishment laid down in Mobilization Plan 22, the number of Red Army rifle divisions in peacetime was to remain at 96 divisions in 1938 with the following replenishment status:

Table III.7

96 rifle divisions, of which:

- 3 rifle divisions with 13,000 soldiers each

- 9 rifle divisions with 10,000 soldiers each

- 38 rifle divisions with 6,950 soldiers each

- 36 rifle divisions with 5,220 soldiers each (triple deployments)

- 10 mountain divisions with 4,000 soldiers each

14

All of the almost combat-ready 10,000 and 13,000 divisions were still stationed in the Far East.

In the west, the Red Army General Staff's calculation of 24 March 1938 envisaged the deployment of 124 rifle/mountain infantry and 16 cavalry divisions as well as 26 armoured and mechanized brigades. Soon after the confirmation of Mobilization Plan 22, partial mobilization measures were carried out in 1938 in connection with the worsening situation between Germany and Czechoslovakia with the aim of providing military assistance to Czechoslovakia.

In the Kiev and Belorussian Special Military Districts, but also in the Leningrad Military District, 17 divisions were filled up to war strength by calling up 8,000 reservists per division. In addition, three tank corps, 15 tank brigades and a number of air brigades, 34 air bases, etc. were replenished. To this end, the directive of September 29, 1938 stipulated that 328,700 reservists be called up for the so-called "major training exercises", including the call-up of 250-275 of the registered commanders and political workers. The fall dismissals of personnel earmarked for transfer to the reserves were suspended.

A total of 60 rifle divisions in the zone up to the Urals, including 30 divisions in the western military districts, 16 cavalry divisions, 3 tank corps, 22 independent tank brigades and 17 aviation brigades were included in the mobilization measures.

In his directive, the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR ordered the Vinnitsa Army Group to be placed in combat readiness and brought to the state border of the USSR and the Zhitomir Army Group to be concentrated in the Novograd-Vblynsky and Shepetovka regions. The air defense of six western military districts was put on combat readiness and the field operations of the army groups were deployed on September 1, 1938. ³⁰

The Red Army's mobilization measures reached their peak in the third decade of September 1938, increasing the strength of the Red Army to more than 2,000,000 soldiers in September 1938.

However, on September 29, 1938, the Munich Agreement on the cession of the Sudetenland to Germany was signed, which meant that the planned operations could not be carried out.

In connection with military conflicts over border disputes with the Japanese army at Lake Khassan in the Far East, the Red Army, on the orders of the People's Commissar of Defense, established combat readiness in formations and units of the Primorsky Army and the Pacific Fleet on 31 July 1938. As part of mobilization measures, the units and troop units of the Far Eastern Front were replenished. However, the events at Lake Khassan revealed serious deficiencies in the mobilization of the 1st Far Eastern Front (Primorsk Army) and in the work of the staffs of the formations and units, so that in November 1938 the Supreme War Council under the People's Commissar of Defence established a series of measures to immediately increase combat and mobilization readiness. 31

Although there was no significant increase in the size of the Red Army between 1936 and 1938, as evidenced by the rifle squads, the conversion to the cadre system laid essential foundations for the subsequent reinforcement of the Red Army. For this purpose, the three rifle regiments of the rifle divisions were set up in such a way that each of these regiments could be deployed to the next higher structure, the rifle division, if required. 32

If the general mobilization had been carried out in 1938, the number of rifle divisions could have amounted to 170, 110 of which were so-called "three-part" divisions.

In the North Caucasian Military District, the development of Rifle Regiment 221 into the 74th Rifle Division, disguised as reserve training, was successfully tested.

On 13 November 1938, the Main Military Council passed a resolution to form an additional 30 new rifle divisions in the event of mobilization, but these could not be introduced into combat earlier than after three months, i.e. after the period in which it was assumed that the front would require reinforcement with fresh divisions. 33

The year 1939

On January 1, 1939, the peacetime strength of the Red Army was 1,943,000 AA. This already exceeded the peacetime strength not to be reached until 1942 according to the Perspective Plan and was 3.5 times that of 1930.

The overall development of the number of divisions of the Red Army's rifle troops from January 1, 1937 to January 1, 1939 is shown in the following table:

Table III.8

On 01.01.1937

On 01.01.1938

On 01.01.1939

Rifle divisions

88

86

84

Of which –cadre divisions

49

50

84

– Mixed divisions

4

2	
-	
- Territorial divisions	
35	
34	
-	
Mountain divisions	
(all are cadre divisions)	
9	
10	
14	
Total divisions	
97	
96	
98	
18	

As the table above shows using the example of the number of rifle divisions, there was no significant increase in the number of rifle divisions in the Red Army between 1936 and 1938, but the number of army personnel did increase. Their conversion to the cadre system of replenishment is also clear.

In connection with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by German troops on March 15, 1939, the combat and mobilization readiness of the Red Army was increased.

On March 23, 1939, the General Staff, in accordance with instructions from the Soviet government, issued a directive on mobilization to the military councils of all military districts on the order of reinforcement and deployment of troops depending on the tension of the international situation. The directive took into account the experience gained from the partial mobilization of the Kiev and Belorussian Special Military Districts in the summer of 1938 and provided for the mobilization of troops to be carried out according to two variants with the letters "A" and "B". 34 35

With the signal "A", all troops were to be replenished to the wartime strength plan in covered form within a period of 10 days. The reserve units and the war commissariats were not to be reinforced. Only partial reinforcements were to be made in response to the "B" signal.

In continuation of the directive of 23 March, on 20 May 1939 the General Staff issued a further directive on mobilization No. 2/1/50698, signed by the People's Commissar of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff, to the military councils of the military districts and armies on the implementation of the general, open and partial mobilization of the Red Army within the framework of the current MP 22.

General and open mobilization was to be declared on the basis of telegrams signed by the People's Commissar of Defence by the local military bodies in orders to be posted in every locality.

The covered partial mobilization was called "large-scale training exercises", which were to be carried out according to the variants "A" and "B" (see above).

This type of mobilization was not made public; those to be called up only received the personnel deployment order.

The directive stipulated that all measures of covered partial mobilization were to be carried out in the strictest secrecy and also within a period of 10 days. For example, it was ordered not to publish any information about training and the implementation of the "major training exercises" (the covered partial mobilization) in the press, not to hold any assemblies or meetings, not to release wartime funds, not to

call up conscripts, means of transport and horses from other military districts and to ensure that the troops were provided with material and supplies in accordance with peacetime standards and at the expense of current rations and existing reserves.

Civilian authorities and offices were not mobilized for reasons of secrecy.

In May 1939, work began on laying the foundations for the reorganization of the Red Army, a crucial part of which was a new system of mobilization deployment of the land forces. The basic idea was to create a strong standing army prepared for war deployment in peacetime before the start of hostilities, which could be built up to war strength in the shortest possible time with minimal mobilization effort. To this end, it was planned to convert the divisions, which had previously been planned as part of the so-called "triple deployment" but would only be deployed in the event of mobilization, into open, i.e. existing, units, albeit with a reduced replenishment level.

This was intended to create the decisive prerequisites for

1. prevent the formation of new divisions, which would largely expose mobilization;
2. only having to replenish the basic structures of the divisions (e.g. commanders, staffs, core personnel, regular crews, etc.), which were already in place and consolidated in peacetime, in a pre-war period;
3. to be able to carry out these call-ups of reservists disguised under the pretext of reservist exercises, summer camps, retraining for new combat technology, etc;
4. to be able to establish the unity of the units for combat deployment more quickly by expanding the training elements already mastered as part of combat training.

The wealth of measures implemented at the highest level in the short term (cf. Table III.9) shows the extraordinary importance attached to this restructuring.

Table III.9 (cf. p. 99)

Table III.9

May 1939

First considerations on the reorganization of the Red Army;

July 13/14, 1939

Discussion of these proposals by the People's Commissar for Defense by the top political and military leadership in Stalin's cabinet;

July 14, 1939

Decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CP(B), "... all divisions of the Triple Deployment already in peacetime... to develop as independent divisions";

July 15, 1939

Decision of the Supreme Military Council on the "urgent development" of these confirmed new structures;

July 16, 1939

Conference of the People's Commissar for Defense to discuss the content of the tasks received;

July 21/22, 1939

Decision of the Supreme Military Council to form a commission to deal with all questions connected with the reorganization;

July 27, 1939

Meeting of the commission. After examination, the commission determined that the material reserves for these new structures were available in all military districts and proposed that they be transferred to them by November 1, 1939;

August 01, 1939

Discussion of the reorganization measures in Stalin's cabinet;

August 10, 1939

Further discussion of these measures in Stalin's cabinet;

August 15, 1939

Directive from the People's Commissar of Defense to the military councils of the western and central military districts;

August 25, 1939

Further discussion of these measures in Stalin's cabinet;

September 01, 1939

Politburo of the Central Committee of the CP(B) confirms the proposals of the People's Commissar of Defense on the future strength and structure of the Red Army;

September 01, 1939

Adoption of the law on general conscription;

September 02, 1939

Council of People's Commissars adopts the plan for the reorganization of the Red Army.

20

The reorganization of the Red Army was obviously initiated by Stalin personally in May 1939. The first consultation on this took place on 13/14 July 1939 in Stalin's cabinet, and the further consultations on these organizational measures to perfect the Red Army on 1, 10 and 25 August 1939 by the top political and military leadership also took place in Stalin's cabinet, according to the Russian state military archives.

In May/June 1939, the army groups of the special military districts in the European part of the country were de facto reorganized into armies and in July 1939 the deployment of additional rifle divisions began, albeit still according to the "triple deployment" scheme.

Also in May/June 1939, reservists were called up to deploy several rifle divisions in the Urals and eastwards to conduct combat operations at Khalkhin-Gol. In the spring of 1939, 345,000 reservists were called up for the "major training exercises" (partial mobilization). Troops were also deployed to the Far East from other military districts. For example, the 37th Rifle Division of the Belorussian Special Military District was transferred to the Siberian Military District.^{36 37}

By August 1, 1939, the strength of the Red Army had risen to more than 2,000,000 soldiers.

In accordance with the resolutions passed to reorganize the Red Army, on 15 August 1939 the People's Commissar of Defence issued a directive to the military councils of the western and central military districts with the task of reorganizing the existing cadre units in the period from 25 August to 1 December 1939. In the period from August 25 to December 1, 1939, the previous cadre divisions were to be transferred to the new staffing plan of 8,900 soldiers each and 36 divisions of the triple deployment were to be restructured into 92 divisions of 6,000 soldiers each and 18 command organs (staffs) for rifle corps were to be formed to ensure the command of the large number of newly created rifle divisions.

The military councils of the Transcaucasian, Trans-Baikal and Central Asian military districts as well as the 1st and 2nd Red Banner Armies (Far East) were not given this task.

In August 1939, the military missions of England, France and the USSR held tripartite talks between their general staffs on joint action against the "block of aggressors". According to "official information" from the military missions, England, France, Poland and the USSR had 311 divisions, 11,700 aircraft, 15,400 tanks and 9,600 heavy guns at their disposal at this time. According to calculations by the military missions, Germany and Italy had 168 divisions, 7,700 aircraft, 8,400 tanks and 4,350 heavy guns.

On August 15, 1939, at the meeting of the military missions of the USSR, Great Britain and France in

Moscow, the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, Shaposhnikov, informed that the Red Army could deploy 120 rifle divisions, 16 cavalry divisions, 9,000 to 10,000 tanks and 5,000 to 5,500 aircraft on "request" and transfer them to the front in Europe. "The concentration of the army will take place within 8 to 20 days". According to different variants of the start of a war of a possible coalition against Germany, the deployment of 63, 90 or 120 rifle divisions with a total of 2,000,000 men was proposed. The measures taken by the Red Army in the summer of 1939 to perfect its mobilization readiness were described in the secret documents as "organizational measures of the rifle troops, the motor vehicle units and the command of the rifle corps".³⁸

After the failure of the talks between the military missions of the USSR, Great Britain and France, which were clearly directed against Germany and represented a renewed attempt at encirclement, the treaty between the USSR and Germany was concluded in Moscow on August 23, 1939.

At the IV. Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on September 1, 1939, the transition to new structures and the changed forms of replenishment of the Red Army was decided with the law on general conscription and implemented by the end of 1939. The conscription age was lowered from 21 to 19, and even to 18 for secondary school graduates, with the aim of increasing the number of militarily trained reservists and ensuring the numerical reinforcement of the armed forces. This was intended to secure the system of replenishing the Red Army with trained reservists, to create a large potential of reservists for the creation of a multi-million army, to further increase the combat value of the units and formations, to facilitate mobilization and to shorten the transition times of the replenished troops to combat deployment by establishing unity more quickly. The active service period for the non-commissioned officer corps of the land forces was increased from 2 to 3 years, and to 3 years for the crews and non-commissioned officer corps of the air forces and border troops.

On the ships of the border troops, the period of service was now 4 years and on the warships and in the units of the naval fleet even 5 years.

Compulsory reserve service was also significantly extended to one and a half years for enlisted men and 3 years for officers in the law on general compulsory military service. ^{39 40}

The law on general conscription thus served to rapidly increase the number of trained reservists immediately available.

Already on 2 September 1939, the "Plan of Reorganization of the Land Forces of the USSR for the Years 1939-1940" was confirmed and issued as a directive by the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (No.: 1355-279ss).

This plan was adopted with the "aim of strengthening the rifle troops" and provided for the number of rifle divisions to be increased to 173 divisions in peacetime, while at the same time completely abandoning the principle of triple deployment. The following divisions were planned:

Table III. 10

173 rifle divisions, of which:

17 rifle divisions with 14,000 soldiers each;

1 rifle division with 12,000 soldiers;

33 rifle divisions with 8,900 soldiers each;

76 rifle divisions with 6,000 soldiers each;

33 rifle divisions with 3,000 soldiers each;

13 mountain infantry divisions with 4,000 soldiers each.

24

The number of rifle divisions with more than 12,000 AA thus rose to 18 divisions.

As early as the summer of 1939, a commission had drawn up proposals for restructuring the rifle divisions with a personnel strength of 18,000 AA. A rifle division with two artillery regiments, an anti-

tank division and an anti-aircraft division was designated as a "division of the new organization".⁴¹ It should be noted that neither the name nor the content of this plan can be linked to the German-Polish War that began on September 1, 1939, or to the USSR's impending war against Poland (from September 17, 1939). This is also confirmed by the start of the first preparatory work for the reorganization of the Red Army as early as May 1939.

In preparation for the campaign against Poland, which began on September 17, 1939, and the reconquest of the western territories of Belarus and the Ukraine, the People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR issued directive no. 14650 to the military councils of the Leningrad, Belorussian Special, Kiev Special, Moscow, Kalinin, Order and Kharkov military districts with the instruction to call up the registered reservists to the military units and facilities of the military districts under the pretext of "major training exercises".

All units and facilities, including the reserve units, of the military districts concerned were mobilized. The rear services were given the wartime structure. The call-ups were carried out on the basis of Mobilization Plan 22 and Directive No. 2/1/50698 according to variant "A" in strict secrecy with personnel deployment orders without announcing the order.

Based on the assumption that a covered partial mobilization required about 10 days until combat readiness was established, these "major training exercises" of the western military districts were already triggered on 7 September 1939.^{42 43}

As Table III.1 below shows, the covered partial mobilization still had a number of serious shortcomings. While the supply of reservists, at 93.3 % of those called up, could still be rated as satisfactory, the supply of horses and especially means of transportation was completely inadequate. A whole series of units and troop units received no supply at all. For example, Flak Regiment 1 of the air defense had a shortage of 85 vehicles and 27 tractors, which were urgently needed to transport the guns.

Table III.1

Number of mobilized units and troop units in the Belorussian Special Military District

Arrival of mobilized replenishments in the units and troop units of the Belorussian Special Military District on September 14, 1939

Reservists

Horses

Vehicles

19

93,3 %

88.6 % 9 units remained without supply

55.9 % 6 associations remained without supply

27

The Polish campaign of the Soviet Union began on September 17, 1939 and ended on October 10, 1939. Despite the above-mentioned mobilization deficiencies, the Red Army achieved the objectives of its Polish campaign.

According to the text of the document of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR dated October 23, 1939, no. 81229 ss/ow, addressed to the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CP(B) and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, "in connection with the establishment of new borders" (in the west of the USSR) and the "introduction of our troops into the territory of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the necessity of changes" to the measures previously laid down by the directive of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of September 2, 1939, has become apparent. This

refers to the annexation of the Baltic states.

These changes in parts of the rifle troops were justified by the "need to maintain troops on the territory of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, as well as troops deployed in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in reinforced formations".

As the People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR stated in the above-mentioned document of 23 October 1939, the events developing in the west also meant that the Red Army still had to deploy the rifle divisions in the seven western military districts according to the old war structure (with only one artillery regiment per rifle division).

On October 26, 1939, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CP (B) confirmed the proposals of the People's Commissar and set the structural peacetime strength of the Red Army at 173 rifle divisions. Now 43 rifle divisions already have a replenishment level of 14,000 soldiers and a further 57 rifle divisions have more than 12,000 soldiers. However, in order to avoid a large increase in the strength of the Red Army for economic reasons, the People's Commissar of Defense proposed increasing the number of cadre divisions with a staffing plan of 3,000 army personnel to 60 divisions. 44 45

The 173 divisions of the rifle troops were thus filled as follows:

Table III.12

43 rifle divisions with 14,000 soldiers (of which 12 divisions Ukrainian Front, 12 divisions Baltic Front, 15 divisions in the Far East, 1 division Leningrad, 1 division Karelian, 1 division Odessa and 1 division Trans-Baikal Military District);

3 rifle divisions with motorized rear services with 12,000 soldiers (in Mongolia);

54 rifle divisions with 12,000 soldiers (of which 10 divisions Ukrainian Front, 10 divisions Baltic Front, 13 divisions Leningrad Military District);

60 rifle divisions with 3,000 soldiers each;

13 mountain divisions with 4,000 soldiers each.

The Red Army's peacetime deployment plan thus grew to 2,408,600 army personnel.

In the fall of 1939, the General Staff prepared a grouping of troops divided into 4 armies on the territory of the Leningrad Military District for the attack on Finland (the so-called Winter War). To create the assault grouping, rifle divisions from six western military districts (Kalinin, Western Special, Baltic, Belorussian Special, Moscow and Kiev Special Military Districts) were concentrated in the Leningrad Military District.

At the beginning of the Soviet-Finnish war, the grouping of Soviet troops on the territory of the Leningrad Military District included 425,000 soldiers, 1,476 tanks, 1,576 guns and 2,446 aircraft.

The total number of divisions of the Red Army under the conditions of the development of combat operations of the Soviet-Finnish war, which began on November 30, 1939, was set at 160 divisions by the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR on December 28, 1939.

At the end of December 1939, the General Staff also deployed the 13th Army and formed the Northwestern Front on January 7, 1940 from the command of the Leningrad Military District.

On January 1, 1940, the strength of the Northwestern Front grouping amounted to 551,000 soldiers.

For the final stage of the war, the General Staff formed the 15th Army on the basis of the Southern Group of the 8th Army. On February 11, 1940, the second stage of combat operations began, which ended with the breakthrough through the Mannerheim Line and led to the conclusion of a peace treaty on March 12, 1940.

At the end of the Soviet-Finnish war, 55 rifle divisions, 4 cavalry divisions, 8 armored brigades and 3 airborne brigades with a total strength of 761,000 soldiers (at the beginning of March) and a strength of 917,000 soldiers were concentrated on the Northwest Front. In other words, the average replenishment of a division was approx. 12,400 soldiers. This fact, that despite

Despite the execution of the war of aggression against Finland, the participating units were not fully replenished in accordance with the war structure, but only about 83%, is extraordinarily remarkable and allows conclusions to be drawn about the combat readiness of incompletely replenished units during the German-Russian war that began on June 22, 1941.

The replenishment of the Red Army divisions with more than 650,000 reservists of soldier and non-commissioned officer ranks and their establishment of combat readiness were carried out as "major training exercises" (partial mobilization).

At the end of the Soviet-Finnish war, the Red Army had 117 rifle divisions (including motorized and mountain rifle divisions) that had been replenished or reinforced according to the wartime staffing plan. The year 1940

On April 4, 1940, the People's Commissar of Defence issued a written notification stating the strength and number of the Red Army's rifle troops at the end of the "Winter War" on the basis of the specifications of December 28, 1939, with 160 rifle divisions. Of these, 117 rifle divisions had been filled up for war or were in the reinforced inventory (including the motorized rifle divisions and mountain divisions) with a total strength of the Red Army of approx. 4 million army personnel (excluding the naval fleet) including the more than 650,000 reservists (soldiers and non-commissioned officers) called up as part of the partial mobilization.^{46 47}

In order to recapture the peacetime structure, the People's Commissar proposed increasing the number of rifle divisions (with at least 12,000 soldiers) in the reinforced inventory to 100 divisions (based on the pre-war status) with the aim of "replenishing cadres and increasing combat readiness". These 160 rifle divisions, structured into 52 rifle corps, were to be maintained in the following replenishment status:

Table III.13

Document dated April 04, 1940-160 rifle divisions, of which:

3 rifle divisions with 14,000 soldiers each

90 rifle divisions with 12,000 soldiers each

3 motorized rifle divisions with 12,000 soldiers each

4 motorized divisions with 12,000 soldiers each

6 mountain infantry divisions with 9,000 soldiers each

7 mountain infantry divisions with 7,500 soldiers each

50 rifle divisions with 6,000 soldiers each

8 mountain infantry divisions with 6,000 soldiers each

31

The main content of this memorandum of April 4, 1940, however, were the proposals of the People's Commissar for Defence, confirmed on the same day, for the concentration of considerable troop contingents returning from the campaign against Finland and still filled up for war on the southern theater of war.

Two rifle corps (6 rifle divisions), 1 cavalry division, 20 artillery units and 54 aviation squadrons were transferred to the Transcaucasian and North Caucasian Military Districts as well as the Kiev Special and Odessa Military Districts to reinforce the South/Southwest directions. One armored regiment each from the North Caucasian and Transcaucasian Military Districts were deployed as armored brigades and were used to reinforce the armored troops of the Transcaucasian Military District.

To strengthen the air defense of the southern military districts, 27 anti-aircraft divisions of medium and smaller caliber were newly formed and the anti-aircraft protection of Baku, Tbilisi, Batumi, Tuapse and Novorossisk was significantly increased by combining 17 divisions into anti-aircraft regiments to protect against expected bombardments of the oil fields by British and French air forces. ⁴⁸

As the Kiev Special Military District was also militarily reinforced, it must be assumed that the

reinforcement of the south and south-west directions also served to prepare for the seizure of Bessarabia and Bukovina.

On April 14 (17), 1940, at a conference to evaluate the Russo-Finnish War, Stalin addressed senior commanders of the Red Army (see Chapter II, Stalin's speech). In his assessment of the state of the Red Army, Stalin assumed that the Red Army had never fought a modern war. The localized battles at Khalkhin Gol, at Lake Khazan or in Mongolia were small episodes, he called the war against Poland a walkover and the civil war was not a real war, as it was fought without artillery, without air forces, without tanks, without mine launchers, and concluded that the Red Army should be prepared for a modern war. A modern war, however, required "mass artillery", "mass air forces, not hundreds, but thousands..." and "masses of tanks, not hundreds but thousands. Tanks with protective armor" and mine launchers. But a modern army is also an army trained to attack. No other army could be called an army.

49

Obviously, this speech by Stalin was of extraordinary importance, as the further development of measures to increase the Red Army's manpower and mobilization readiness proves, and was regarded by the General Staff as pointing the way forward.

As early as 9 May 1940, Stalin and Molotov received another written communication from the People's Commissar of Defence specifying the changes planned in the Red Army.⁵⁰

The main content of this communication was:

1. the systematic reinforcement of the rifle troops by increasing the number of rifle divisions strong for war or in the reinforced inventory (with at least 12,000 soldiers) from 100 (decided on April 04, 1940) to 105 rifle divisions and the new formation of one division (the Karelo-Finnish Division), as documented in Table III.14:

Table III.14

Document dated May 09, 1940 -161 divisions, of which:

3 rifle divisions with 14,000 soldiers each

15 rifle divisions with 12,500 soldiers each

80 rifle divisions with 12,000 soldiers each

3 motorized rifle divisions with 12,000 soldiers each

4 motorized divisions with 12,000 soldiers each

10 mountain infantry divisions with 9,000 soldiers each

43 rifle divisions with 6,000 soldiers each

3 rifle divisions with 3,000 soldiers each

35

2. the reinforcement of the air forces in the interest of establishing new squadrons and the training of aeronautical cadres by increasing the previously planned number of personnel from 230,000 to 291,210 soldiers;

3. the concentration of troops (artillery, anti-aircraft artillery, air forces) that are strong in the war or in the reinforced inventory, as already determined on April 4, 1940, in the southwestern and southern military districts (in the Kiev Special, Odessa and Transcaucasian Military Districts) and the retention of the fortified areas along the Dnieper in the war structure;

4. returning part of the troops (especially armored troops, artillery, etc.) from the wartime structure to the peacetime structure;

5. the transfer to the reserve of the 686,329 reservists called up for the Finnish campaign as part of the partial mobilization with the aim of reducing the total strength of the Red Army to 3,200,000 soldiers.⁵²

It can be assumed that Stalin did not consider these proposals by the People's Commissar of Defence

from April 4 and May 9, 1940 to be sufficient for his planned expansionist policy, so that on May 21, 1940, the Politburo of the CP(B) Central Committee passed a more stringent resolution on the strength and composition of the Red Army with the following essential content following further proposals by the People's Commissar of Defence:⁵³

1. the troop strength of the Red Army, which amounted to 3,990,993 AA on May 1, 1940 after the end of the Russo-Finnish War and was to be reduced to 3,302,220 AA by the transfer of 658,773,55 56 soldiers to the reserve, was increased again to 3,620,440 AA by the immediate conscription of 318,220 new conscripts into the Red Army in June/July 1940. In order to prevent a reduction in the combat readiness of the Red Army, discharges of participants in the Winter War were not permitted until two months after the new, younger cohorts had been called up. At the same time, orders were given to delay the transfer of the commanders called up for the Finnish campaign to the reserves.

2. taking into account the additional formation of two further motorized divisions, the number of rifle divisions increased to a total of 163 rifle divisions with 107 rifle divisions of at least 12,000 AA.

Table III.15

Document dated May 21, 1940 –163 rifle divisions, of which:

3 rifle divisions with 14,000 soldiers

15 rifle divisions with 12,550 soldiers

80 rifle divisions with 12,000 soldiers

6 motorized divisions with 12,000 soldiers

3 motorized rifle divisions with 12,000 soldiers

3 motorized rifle divisions with 9,000 soldiers

10 mountain infantry divisions with 9,000 soldiers

43 rifle divisions with 6,000 soldiers

40

3 In addition to the units concentrated in the southern military districts, a number of Red Army tank brigades stationed in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as artillery units in the Leningrad military district, were now also kept in the war structure.

(4) Irrespective of the discharges of the approx. 658,773 reservists who had served and the conscription of 318,220 younger conscripts, a further partial mobilization for the conscription of 766,000 reservists was ordered for 1940. With these call-ups, all 43 divisions of the 6,000-strong force were increased by 5,000 soldiers to the reinforced force (11,000 soldiers), and the divisions of the 12,000-strong force of the Kiev Special, Belorussian Special, Odessa, Kharkov, North Caucasian and Transcaucasian Military Districts were increased by 2,000 soldiers to 14,000. The artillery units, the air defense and the fortified areas also received reinforcements totalling 297,000 soldiers.

According to the minutes of the meeting of the Defence Committee on 21 May 1940, these call-ups were intended to increase the troops' readiness for mobilization.⁵⁷

The following conclusion can be drawn from the content of the previous written communications from the People's Commissar for Defense to Stalin and Molotov after the end of the Russo-Finnish War and the fundamental decision of the Defense Committee of May 21, 1940, which was more in the nature of immediate measures:

1. it is obvious that this decision created the personnel and mobilization basis for the continuation of the policy of further locally limited campaigns against the Baltic states, against Bessarabia and Bukovina and also against East Prussia (cf. Chapter VI, Deployment, decision of 04 July 1940).

2) The systematic increase in the combat strength of the Red Army's rifle troops was continued by the creation of three more rifle divisions. By increasing the number of 12,000-man divisions from 100 to 107 divisions, mobilization times in the rifle divisions were shortened. The total number of soldiers in

the rifle troops, including corps headquarters with corps units and airborne brigades, rose to 1,760,164 soldiers.

3. the permission granted in the same document to carry out a further partial mobilization ("major training exercises") with a total of 766,000 reservists and, for a limited period, to exceed the peacetime strength decided by the Defence Committee by 318,220 soldiers, turned the dismissals declared with publicity after the "Winter War" into a sham demobilization.

Gabriel Gorodetzky sees things differently in his book "The Great Deception". He writes:

"The demobilization plan (of the Red Army- the author) of 9 May 1940, which Voroshilov had drawn up, is of the greatest historical significance. It was presented to Stalin one day before the German invasion of France and shows that the Red Army was preparing a massive demobilization,... Of the army's total strength of 3.2 million, 686,329 men were to be discharged without delay. This shows that in the early stages of the war there was no master plan (in the Soviet Union - the author) to use the attrition of the belligerent states for their own expansion."58

So that's how it is. Gorodetzky omits the decision of 21 May 1940 to reinforce the Red Army with the aforementioned 318,220 new conscripts and the renewed partial mobilization of summer/autumn 1940 with 766,000 reservists. He is mistaken several times in this paragraph. The 658,773 reservists were not to be discharged from the total number of 3.2 million, but rather from the total number of 3,990,993 soldiers, according to the above-mentioned resolution of May 21, 1940, in order to reach the total number of 3,302,220 soldiers.

Naturally, the large number of new higher tactical units to be created also required the necessary associations, i.e. army staffs/army field commands, to lead them. Thus, on June 21, 1940, the People's Commissar of Defence, Marshal of the Soviet Union, C.K. Timoshenko, issued his Order No. 4 (Point 3) on the creation of the 17th Army. In July 1940, the 26th Army was created on the German border, i.e. between June 21, 1940 and the end of July 1940, not only the 17th and 26th Armies were created, but also the army staffs numbered in between. (All armies were numbered consecutively). Thus ten army staffs were newly formed.59

The formation of these ten army staffs from June 21, 1940 to the end of July 1940, i.e. at a time when all local conflicts/wars were considered to be over, raises the question of what enormous war these army field commanders were created for?

However, the official justification for the permanent expansion of the Red Army in the summer of 1940 was that the number of "pure rifle divisions" was no longer sufficient due to the mass introduction of Red Army divisions into the Baltic states and the provision of troops for the "liberation" of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, as well as the eight motorized rifle divisions to be restructured for the mechanized corps.

Due to the previous long mobilization times of three months for the 30 additional rifle divisions (cf. The year 1938), it was now decided on 4 July 1940 to set up 23 divisions with a cadre of 3,000 soldiers in addition to the existing 177 divisions (including the armoured divisions) as divisions of the second echelon with a mobilization time of one month, although these could not initially be fully provided with armament, e.g. with 122 mm howitzers.

By the winter of 1940/1941, these 23 rifle divisions had already grown to a personnel strength of approx. 5,900 soldiers per division. The total number of divisions was then to be 200.60

The formation of a further 30 divisions, with a mobilization period of three months, as determined on 13 November 1938, was retained. In addition, the formation of another 30 divisions by the end of the first year of the war was planned. This meant that the total number of divisions after mobilization of the Red Army was to be 260.61

The increase in the number of divisions in the event of mobilization in accordance with the resolution of

4 July 1940 is shown in the following table:

Table III.16

Period

Mobilization increases

New stock

July 04, 1940

1 month after mobilization

3 months after mobilization

1 year after mobilization

Stock (incl. the armored divisions)

Replenishment of 23 divisions of the 3000-strong inventory

New formation of 30 divisions

New formation of 30 further divisions

177 divisions

200 divisions

230 divisions

260 divisions

46

Based on the assumption that the structure of the 12,000 Rifle Divisions had proved its worth, a proposal to perfect the structures was confirmed at the same time. Further divisions (3 rifle divisions from the 14,000-strong force and 3 divisions from the 9,000-strong force) were converted to the 12,000-strong force. All six of these divisions were deployed in the western military districts. The creation of uniform structures was intended to strengthen the western military districts, whose holdings of 12,000 rifle divisions had now increased to 70 divisions, to reduce the personnel replenishment required in the course of a partial mobilization and thus to shorten the period of a partial mobilization. To ensure these structural changes, the People's Commissar for Defence submitted to Stalin and Molotov on July 4, 1940 the decision, which was subsequently confirmed, to increase the peacetime strength of the Red Army to 3,410,000 soldiers.^{62 63 64}

To ensure further structural changes, the peacetime strength of the Red Army was increased to 3,461,200 soldiers by resolution of the Council of People's Commissars on July 6, 1940.

Due to the perfection of divisional structures in July 1940 and the deployment of Red Army troops in the western direction, which began in July/August 1940, orders were issued on July 4, 1940 to establish the following deployment in the western border military districts by the end of August 1940 (see

Chapter VI, Deployment, Stage I):

Table III.17

Western border military districts

Number of divisions

Total

SchD.

PzD.

MotD.

Leningrad Military District

14

2
1
17
Baltic Special Military District
11
2
1
14
Western Special Military District
24
2
1
27
Kiev Special Military District
25
4
2
31
Odessa Military District
10
2
1
13
84
12
6
102
48

The concentration of 41 divisions in the Baltic and Western Special Military District after the Baltic and Bessarabian campaigns in late August/early September 1940 compared to the 31 divisions in the Kiev Special Military District, as shown in Table III. 17, proves that the main efforts were now directed towards East Prussia.

The directive of the Chief of the Main Administration of the Red Army of July 11, 1940 on early conscription, beginning July 25, 1940, proves (here using the example of the excerpt from the directive of the Western Special Military District) the extraordinary urgency of all measures to increase the filling level of the Red Army units and formations in the summer of 1940, which 1t. Table III.17 were involved in the deployment.

Quote III.18

"On the basis of the directive of the Chief of the Main Administration of the Red Army of July 11, 1940 No. 648/2, the Commander-in-Chief of the troops of the Western Special Military District has ordered

1. to carry out the early enlistment of draftees with higher education into the Red Army, including those who only finished military training schools in 1940.

2. citizens born in 1922, 1921 and 1920, as well as those born in older years who had previously taken

advantage of a deferment until the completion of military training schools, shall be called up for military service in advance.

3. conscription must begin on July 25, 1940 and must be completed by July 30, 1940. "

49

On July 25, 1940, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR passed the resolution "On the preparation of mobilization plans for the years 1940 and 1941" for industry.^{65 66}

Quite obviously, the previously unpublished decision to draw up the Red Army's Mobilization Plan 41 was also made on the same day.

In any case, Sakharov confirmed the start of the preparation of the mobilization plan for 1940 and 1941 in August/September 1940. In a note, August 1940 is mentioned as the start of the preparation of the first draft of Mobilization Plan 41.⁶⁷

In a presentation given on 12 August 1940 by the Deputy Chief of the General Staff to the USSR People's Commissar of Defence, S. K. Timoshenko, on measures to reorganize the engineer troops, the latter proposed the following measures to "improve combat training and deployment in wartime" in order to perfect the structure of the engineer troops:

1. reorganize the existing 22 pioneer battalions into 24 independent pioneer regiments, in existence 1 pioneer battalion each (1 pioneer company, 1 bridge construction company and 1 road construction company), 1 motorized pioneer battalion (2 pioneer companies and 1 technical company) and 1 electrotechnical battalion, and

2. to convert the existing 21 pontoon battalions into 14 pontoon and bridge construction regiments, with 3 pontoon battalions each.⁶⁸

In view of the many water obstacles in East Prussia, the pioneer troops were assigned great importance. The new army field units set up on the border with Germany from 21 June to the end of July 1940, the partial mobilization carried out again in mid-1940 with the call-up of 766,000 reservists to replenish personnel, the renewed early call-up of younger age groups amounting to 318,220 conscripts, the delay of two months in the discharge of participants in the Winter War, the concentration of approx. 12,000 soldiers in the western military districts, the accelerated completion of the restructuring of the mechanized corps, the restructuring of the engineer troops, etc. confirm the East Prussian campaign in preparation, even if the operational plan of 19 August 1940 was ultimately no longer confirmed.

As a result of the plan for the strategic development of the Red Army of 18 September 1940 for the year 1941, which was finalized and confirmed in October 1940, the People's Commissar of Defence received Stalin's instructions to form an additional 20 machine gun artillery brigades by 1 May 1941.⁶⁹

Although the measures introduced so far in the area of mobilization improved its foundations and also shortened mobilization times, they did not yet put the Red Army in a position to lead a surprise offensive against the Wehrmacht, which had meanwhile become free in the west.

The "Considerations on the Fundamentals of the Strategic Development of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the West and in the East for the Years 1940 and 1941" of 18 September 1940 also made this contradiction between the plans of the General Staff (The operational plan of 18 September 1940, confirmed on 15 October 1940, was the first confirmed plan for offensive actions of the Red Army against Germany that became known) and the possibilities of its realization clear.⁷⁰

While the enemy assessments of the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army assumed a concentration time of the Wehrmacht of approx. 10 to 15 days, approx. 25 days were calculated for the mobilization and concentration of their own forces. This meant that the Wehrmacht would have been about 10 days ahead of the Red Army in mobilizing and concentrating in the autumn of 1940. This contradiction resulted in the strategic task for the Red Army to "securely cover our borders with active defense during the period of troop concentration. " This task is therefore not an expression of a defensive

strategy, but resulted from the need at the time for longer mobilization times for the Red Army. The above-mentioned contradiction was only eliminated by Mobilization Plan 41 and its follow-up measures as well as the westward movement of further parts of the Red Army in the course of the pre-war period in the first half of 1941.

The great attention paid by the political leadership to all problems of mobilization readiness of the Red Army in 1940 can be seen in a critical report by K.E. Voroshilov to the People's Commissar of Defence, S.K. Tymoshenko, dated 7 December 1940 on deficiencies in the organization of mobilization, which was made in the presence of Zhdanov, Malenkov and Voznesensky. 71

Among other things, it was reported that

1. the mobilization plan had been destroyed in connection with the war (meaning the "Winter War" - the author) and significant redeployments of troops. The People's Commissar for Defense had not yet drawn up a new mobilization plan.

2) The People's Commissar for Defence had not yet eliminated a number of deficiencies in the mobilization plan that had arisen during the implementation of the partial mobilization in September 1939.

3. 3,155,000 of the reserve conscripts had not been trained. A training plan did not exist.

4. on the structure of the troops - the command of the troop units (regiments) and formations (divisions and brigades) had not been determined. Provisions on troop management (the rear services - the author) are outdated and require revision. The provisions on the field transportation of troops had also not been worked out.72

In view of the work subsequently carried out in the field of mobilization, e.g. the drafting of a new mobilization plan, Mobilization Plan 41, it can be assumed that these deficiencies were reported with the aim of eliminating them and were subsequently also largely eliminated.

The level of mobilization readiness of the Red Army in the first stage from 1937 to 1940 is shown by the reports of the units and units of the Western Special Military District from 19 December 1940.

The evaluation of 467 reports from formations and units to the staff of the Western Special Military District on the basis of Mobilization Plan 22, which was confirmed by the military district on 19 December (air forces on 24 December) 1940, is summarized in the following table:

Table III.19

Weapons units of the Western Special Military District

Total number of units, units, facilities

Of which ready for mobilization or ready for mobilization with restrictions

Of which not ready for mobilization

Number

Percent

Number

Percent

Field guides

7 1

7

100

-

Rifle squads

191

170

89

21

11

Cavalry

8

7

88

1

12

Armored troops

21

12

57

9

43

Air defense

29

29

100

-

-

Fortified rooms

18

9

50

9

50

Technical troops

94

80

85

14

15

Transportation units

4

3

75

1

25

Territorial troops

18

14

78

4

22	
Air Force	
77	
50	
65	
27	
35	
WBMB Total	
467	
381	
82	
86	
18	
57	

Not all, but the reports of some important branches of the armed forces on the status of their mobilization readiness require explanation. A detailed examination of the reports of the Western Special Military District from November/December 1940 produced the following result:

Regarding the reports of the rifle squads:

Twenty-one detachments and units reported as not ready for mobilization would naturally appear to be a high number. However, a detailed examination shows that these included 6 rifle regiments of the army reserve, 6 detoxification companies and 4 anti-aircraft divisions of the rifle troops. Only the condition of the 86th Rifle Division, a division decorated with the Order of the Red Banner and based in Zechanowez, which was reported by the division commander as not ready for mobilization, appears to be significant.

57 Reports on the mobilization readiness of the units of the Western Special Military District, in: On the Eve, Documents, (Russian), pp. 395 to 548.

Since the staff of the Western Special Military District confirmed the commander's report with the entry "The units of the 86th Red Banner Rifle Division are not ready for mobilization", there is therefore no doubt.

As a rule, the causes of deficiencies in the readiness of the troop units and units of the rifle troops for mobilization were reported:

- lack of personnel replenishment with commanders and soldiers;
- deficiencies in the replenishment of material resources and equipment of all kinds, including fuel, rations and sometimes even ammunition, and
- the inadequate provision of means of transportation.

On the reports from the armored forces:

The "Plan of Strategic Deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union" of 18 September 1940 provided for the existence of a Mechanized Corps (the 6th MechK.) and four independent armoured brigades (one independent PzBr. each for the 3rd and 10th Armies and two for the 4th Army). All of these combat units were classified as ready for mobilization. Only the 29th and 44th Light Tank Brigades were rated ready for mobilization with restrictions. The nevertheless considerable number of 9 units not ready for mobilization were exclusively reserve armoured units and units.

On the reports of the air forces:

The relatively high number of TTs and units of the air forces that were not ready for mobilization was due to the reorganization of air units and formations and the conversion of squadrons to new aircraft

technology.

For example, the Western Special Military District was not ordered to reorganize the 42nd Long-Range Bomber Aviation Division (comprising the Long-Range Bomber Aviation Squadrons 96, 98, 107 and - 212) and the 43rd Fighter Aviation Division (comprising the Fighter Aviation Squadrons 160, 161, 162 and 163) until 25 July 1940 by directive of the People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR, and these units were of course reported as not ready for mobilization in the reports of 24 December 1940. There were a number of problems in these units that limited their readiness for mobilization, including a lack of aircraft equipment, insufficient numbers of qualified aircrew or a lack of technical personnel in the fighter squadrons 160 and 161 (Orscha base) and the fighter squadron 162 (Mogilev base) of the 43rd Fighter Division.

The 6th high-speed bomber squadron (Vitebsk base) of the 12th Air Division was also initially classified as not ready for mobilization due to conversion to a new aircraft type and the 209th high-speed bomber squadron (Smolensk base) of the 12th Air Division due to reforming. It is obvious that the operational airfields of the aviation units securing the above-mentioned squadrons also had to be classified as not ready for mobilization.

A number of other aeronautical units classified as not ready for mobilization, such as airbases 525, 527, 530 and 533, were reserve airfield security units.

To the reports of the fortified areas:

The state of mobilization readiness of the troop units and units of the fortified areas must be assessed differently. After all, 50% of the TTs and units were classified as not ready for mobilization and a further 39% with limited mobilization readiness. Only 11% were rated as ready for mobilization.

Essentially, the following reasons led to the negative assessment of the mobilization readiness of the fortified areas:

- complete lack of armament and equipment for units to be formed (e.g.: 66th Fortified Area Command, Osowiec site);
- no available reserves, including a lack of provisions (e.g. 242nd independent anti-tank battery, Stschutschin site);
- failure to draw up mobilization plans (e.g.: 6th field machine gun battery, Grodno site);
- lack of personnel, including unprepared call-ups (e.g. 87th independent machine-gun battery, Stschutschin site).

Since, as is easily recognizable, the causes were not due to new formations or conversions to new combat technology as in the armoured troops or the air forces, one can generally conclude that the fortified areas were deliberately neglected (cf. Chapter I, Theatre of War).

Unfortunately, the published reports on the state of mobilization readiness of Red Army units and units based on Mobilization Plan 22 ended in December 1940.

Information about the later state of mobilization readiness, for example in 1941 on the basis of Mobilization Plan 41, is probably still subject to secrecy in 2015 and has not been published.

Conclusions from the reports on the mobilization readiness of the units, formations and units of the Western Special Military District:

1. the readiness of the units, formations and units of the Western Special Military District to carry out mobilization, which can certainly be taken as representative of the situation in all Western military districts, is afflicted with a whole series of deficiencies, particularly with regard to personnel replenishment and material security.

If one considers the time of the reports in mid-December 1940, one can come to the conclusion that at least half a year until the start of the war, the date of which was hardly known to anyone at the time, was enough time to remedy many deficiencies. Let us also bear in mind that the "major training

exercises", i.e. the partial mobilization of 1940 to replenish personnel, had ended, meaning that the reservists had just been discharged and naturally left gaps in personnel.

2. a whole series of successfully carried out measures to replenish personnel, the covered partial mobilizations to cope with local wars and conflicts by the Red Army prove the Red Army's readiness to mobilize.

(3) The preparation of reports and their examination by the staff of the Western Special Military District confirms that the state of mobilization readiness was given due importance in the command process of commanders and commanders.

4. the necessary legal and organizational provisions for the mobilization of the Red Army were adopted at an early stage in the form of resolutions, directives, laws and regulations by the highest bodies and, as all sources prove, were usually decided personally by Stalin and Molotov.

5 An undoubtedly serious problem in the troops and units converted to new combat technology (e.g. new aircraft technology) was the degree of mastery of the new, sometimes novel technology. Despite determined combat training, it takes many months, sometimes years, depending on the type, to achieve complete mastery.

6. the objective difficulties of the USSR in carrying out the mobilization due to the huge distances, inadequate infrastructure, etc. (e.g. the comparison between Russia and Germany in the First World War) are given conditions that must undoubtedly be taken into account when carrying out the mobilization, but did not prevent it from being carried out.

7) Overall, despite the existing problems, the state of mobilization readiness does not indicate any serious reasons for restricting the Red Army's readiness for war.

Sally W. Stoecker's view that the Red Army was not ready for mobilization and therefore not capable of an offensive against Germany is completely absurd and has been sufficiently refuted by the above-mentioned findings and history.

And there was still around half a year to eliminate existing restrictions.

These reports also prove that, despite all the problems, the fight for a high level of mobilization readiness was an integral part of the leadership activities of the commanders and commanders of the Red Army, as the above-mentioned discussion in the Red Army leadership on 7 December 1940 also proves.

Summary of the

1st stage of the mobilization of the Red Army

(1937 to January/February 1941)

Characteristic for this I. Stage I of the development of the mobilization of the Red Army is characterized by the continuous growth of the Red Army and the systematic creation of the foundations for the formation of a multi-million army while simultaneously carrying out a whole series of operational military measures to achieve local foreign policy goals of the USSR, but also with strict consideration of economic aspects in the interests of the national economy, in particular heavy industry and armaments.

Characteristics of the first stage of mobilization:

○ the creation of all administrative foundations for the perfection and systematic increase of mobilization readiness, in particular taking into account the coveredness of the partial mobilization release of the Red Army;

○ the continuous deployment and formation of Red Army units, aimed at their growth in a covered form;

○ the systematic increase in the peacetime strength of the Red Army by perfecting its structures and raising the personnel replenishment level of units and formations;

○ carrying out "major training exercises" before all campaigns, which, according to their own

documents, had the character of partial mobilizations with an ever-increasing number of called-up reservists and were aimed at securing local campaigns, and

○ increasing the fighting strength of the Red Army while at the same time taking into account the urgent economic requirements of the Soviet economy/armaments industry in the interests of producing the necessary combat technology and armaments.

The 2nd stage (January/February 1941 to June 1941); The stage of extreme growth and extreme growth and partial mobilization against Germany

partial mobilization; The war preparation period

The year 1941

With a troop strength of 3,753,200 soldiers on January 1, 1941, the stage of establishing the Red Army's readiness for war began with an extreme increase in troop strength for such a short time and a perfection of the structures that could be used offensively.

Mobilization planning for the year 1941 played an important role. By the beginning of 1941, three variants of the new mobilization plan had been drawn up, the last of which was confirmed by the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR on 12 February 1941 as Mobilization Plan 1941 (Mobilization Plan 23).

In a memorandum, Zhukov described the following facts as the basis of the new Mobilization Plan 41:

○ the new organization of the rifle and armoured troops, artillery, air defence and air forces;

○ the changed deployment of troops and

○ the possibility of mobilizing troops in a certain order or in a single military district depending on the situation. 73 74

There is no doubt that the need to draw up a new scheme for the mobilization of the Red Army was justified by the reorganization of the infantry and armoured forces, artillery, air forces and air defence, by the inclusion of the western territories annexed in 1939/1940 in the mobilization planning, but also by the transfer of a considerable number of troops to the Baltic states, western Ukraine and western Belarus, as well as Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. It is also customary in the armies to update existing mobilization plans at all levels of command annually or every two years.

However, the content of the new plan, in particular the extreme increase in the number of units (e.g. 314 instead of the 206 divisions planned in the draft, cf. Fig. III.21) in Mobilization Plan 41, cannot be justified in this way. Only foreign policy motives could have been decisive. However, these are not mentioned in Zhukov's draft. The operational plan of September 18, 1940 as the decisive basis of the mobilization plan was also not mentioned, although there must be a close connection between the strategic objectives of the country laid down in the operational plans and the mobilization plan, which had to secure the personnel and material resources to achieve these objectives.

M. V. Sakharov, however, set the record straight when he wrote: "The mobilization plan for 1941 was drawn up in October 1940 on the basis of the 'considerations for deployment'."^ At least that is when it began to be drawn up.

Colonel General Gorkov also emphasizes this connection in the foreword to his interview with Wassiljewski, in which he says that the operational plan was "... carefully coordinated with the mobilization plan and the other plans of the relevant administrations of the Ministry of Defence." 75 76 The first draft of the mobilization plan for 1941 was prepared by the Chief of the General Staff, Army General K. A. Meretzkov, and the Chief of the General Staff's Organ Administration, Major General N. I. Chetverikov.

This draft plan essentially took into account the economic and personnel possibilities of the country. The personnel requirements for soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers were fully covered, with the exception of a few shortfalls in the technical, medical and veterinary fields.

However, this draft was not confirmed, as the intention was to significantly increase the Red Army's combat strength, particularly in the field of infantry and armored troops as well as the air force. Obviously, the first draft of Mobilization Plan 41 in no way corresponded to Stalin's strategic ideas as set out in the Operational Plan of 18 September 1940.

The reasons for the rejection of the first draft of Mobilization Plan 41 and its repeated revisions become clear on closer examination of the following table:

Table IIL20

Operational plan of:

November 13

1938

August 19, 1940 (draft)

September 18, 1940

1940

March 11, 1941

1941

May 15, 1941

1941

Number of units planned in the Red Army's operational plans for the western theater of war

120 divisions (incl. reserves but without LMB)

156 divisions 14 brigades

176 divisions 15 brigades

245 divisions

258 divisions

Number of Wehrmacht units expected in the Red Army's operational plans

(excluding those presumably allied with Germany)

132 divisions (incl. Polish divisions)

173 divisions

173 divisions

200 divisions

180 divisions

61

As can easily be seen, the balance of forces of the sides recognized by the General Staff of the Red Army in the operational plan of 18 September 1940 did not yet permit the successful implementation of this offensive plan due to its approximate balance. The implementation of this operational plan required a huge increase in mobilization numbers, as then laid down in the revised Mobilization Plan 41 on 12 February 1941, the short-term mobilization of the armaments industry and all material resources, which was already de facto initiated in July 1940, and the rapid covered replenishment of the units of the western military districts in particular as part of the "major training exercises" (the covered partial mobilization).

Revision was therefore necessary. This was carried out several times and in February 1941 already under the responsibility of the new Chief of the General Staff, G. K. Zhukov.

Mobilization Plan 41, as confirmed by the Central Committee of the CP(B) and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR on 12 February 1941, in contrast to Mobilization Plan 22 of November 1937, no longer provided for the number of combat units required for a successful opening of the war to be formed after mobilization had been triggered or at the start of the war, but instead all formations were

to be completed by the start of the war. It was planned that only personnel and material replenishments would have to be made during a short, covered period of war. The period of transition to hostilities could thus be significantly streamlined, the mobilization process simplified, its duration shortened, the combat capabilities of the partially mobilized troops increased and, above all, this process kept secret. It is obvious that the units that had already been created and provided with cadres could be filled up to war strength more covertly than new formations of large units or entire associations, especially as the "large training exercises" were no longer considered a special feature due to their annual implementation. The new formations and troop units required for the continuation of the war were moved to the initial period of the war after general and open mobilization had been triggered.

Thus, as M. V. Sakharov noted, "the most important preparatory measures for the decisive battle" were shifted to the period before the war and realized primarily in the months of March to June 1941.⁷⁷

This plan was given the name "Mobilization Plan 23" (hereafter referred to as Mobilization Plan 41) and in the civilian sector "Mobilization Plan 9".

The following table illustrates the development of the plan figures and the extensive changes from the first draft of Mobilization Plan 41 submitted by K. A. Meretzkiy to the plan revised by G. K. Zhukov and to the further formations ordered on April 23, 1941:

Table III.21 (cf. p. 122)

Overall, the following gigantic figures for the personnel staffing plan and the material-technical equipment plan for the state of war in 1941 were adopted with Mobilization Plan 41:

Table III.22 (cf. p. 122)

Table III.21

Planned deployments in wartime

Unconfirmed draft mobilization plan for 1941

Confirmed mobilization plan of February 12, 1941 for the year 1941

Final plan for 1941 after clarifications on April 23, 1941

Land forces Divisions

206

314

303

of which: rifle divisions

170

198

177

Mountain rifle divisions

10

10

19

Mounted rifle divisions

8

2

2

motorized divisions

-

30

31

Armored divisions

18

60

61

Cavalry divisions

-

10

13

Mountain cavalry divisions

-

4

-

Anti-tank artillery brigades

-

-

10

Independent rifle brigades

4

2

3

Airborne brigades

6

6

16

Front field guides

-

9

8

Army field guides

-

27

29

Guided tours of the rifle corps

65

65

62

Guided tours of the mechanized corps

8

30

29

Management of the airborne corps

-

-

5

Guided tours of the cavalry corps

-

-

4

Air forces

Command of the air corps

-

5

8

Air divisions

50

79 (Airborne

79

Independent aviation brigades

4

Divisional

flying squadrons

commands)

343

343

Table IIL22

Planned wartime strength of the Red Army in 1941

Civilian personnel

Horses

8.682.827

187.880

1.136.948

Tanks

Armored vehicles

Aircraft

Guns Mine launchers Motor vehicles Tractors/traction engines

36.879

10.679

32.628

61.223

45.576

595.011

90.847

64

A comparison of the growth figures of Mobilization Plan 41 for the year 1941 with Mobilization Plan 22 for the years 1938-1939 shows that

1. the wartime strength of the Red Army continued to grow from 6,503,000 (1940) to 8,682,827 army personnel (1941).

63 Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR "On the Mobilization Plan -1941" of 12 February 1941, (Russian); in: The Year 1941, Documents, Part I, p. 640.

Sakharov, M.V., The General Staff in the Pre-War Period, (Russian); p. 340/341/385.
64 *ibid*.

2 It is interesting to examine the plans for the rifle troops in Mobilization Plan 41 as the main branch of the land forces.

The 170 rifle divisions planned in the draft of Mobilization Plan 41 were initially increased to 198 rifle divisions and 2 further motorized divisions and 10 mountain rifle divisions were planned, but were restructured to 177 rifle divisions, 19 mountain rifle divisions and 2 motorized rifle divisions with the decision of 23 April 1941.

The structure of a rifle division consisted of: 3 rifle regiments, 2 artillery regiments, 1 anti-tank and 1 anti-aircraft division, 1 reconnaissance battalion (including 1 company of light floating tanks and 1 company of armored personnel carriers), engineer battalion, communications battalion, rear units and facilities.

The formation of the additionally planned rifle divisions began in March 1941 and was to be realized in the shortest possible time. It is noteworthy that the number of mountain infantry divisions, which were prepared for combat in low mountain conditions, almost doubled.

3. the absolute emphasis was placed on the substantial reinforcement of troops suitable for offensive operations.

If one compares the draft Mobilization Plan 41 with the confirmed Mobilization Plan 41, the decisive increase in the number of divisions from 206 to initially 314 (by 52%), the new formation of 28 rifle divisions, 42 armoured divisions, 30 motorized divisions and 29 airborne divisions is remarkable.

The proportionate figures of the total strength of the Red Army, the increase in rifle troops by 537,447 soldiers, mechanized troops by 883,769 soldiers from 9.7 to 12.3 % and the air force by 277,836 soldiers from 3.8 to 6.2%, prove this emphasis.

In view of the priority given to the development of the infantry and armored forces as well as the air forces, a strategic emphasis is already apparent, while, remarkably, at the same time the proportion of the crews of the fortified areas in the total strength of the Red Army fell from 3.3 to 3.0%.

4. the perfection of the command structures through the establishment of warlike field command organs of 9 front and 27 army field commands in Mobilization Plan 41 of 12 February 1941, which had not yet been considered in the draft of autumn 1940, but which already existed to a large extent, is striking. With the creation of 22 mechanized corps headquarters, the conversion to corps structures was continued.

(5) Although essentially all security units, facilities and services were reinforced in terms of personnel by Mobilization Plan 41, their percentage share of the total strength of the Red Army nevertheless fell due to the enormous reinforcement of the branches of arms required for offensive operations with a simultaneous absolute reduction in cavalry units, reserve units and road units.

6 Even Mobilization Plan 41, which was confirmed on 12 February 1941, differed from Zhukov's final draft of Mobilization Plan 41, which had been submitted a few days earlier. The finally confirmed mobilization plan was streamlined, shortened and obviously concentrated on the essentials. Interesting for our considerations is the fact that the mobilization "East" and also the mobilization of the "Fortified Areas", in contrast to the last draft, were no longer mentioned in the confirmed plan (except for a designation in a list of the total mobilization figures in the annex to the plan), i.e. in the given historical situation, in February 1941, they were probably no longer considered essential.

7. in a comparison of the personnel plan figures of Mobilization Plan 41 by military districts (Annex 2 to the plan), the western military districts accounted for 74.8 % and the five western border military districts, as shown in the following Table II 1.23, for 49 % of the total personnel strength of the Red Army, which resulted as follows:

Table IIL23

Military district

Personnel strength after mobilization

ln%

Central command of the People's Commissar

9.872

0,1

Archankelsk Military District

72.045

0,8

Leningrad Military District GMB

714.471

8,3

Baltic Special Military District GMB

546.636

6,3

Western Special Military District GMB

1.099.019!

12,7

Kiev Special Military District GMB

1.388.408!

15,9

Odessa Military District GMB

505.249

5,8

Moscow Military District

614.167

7,1

Three military districts

352.471

4,0

6.503.223

74,8 %

Kharkov military district

356.534

4,1

North Caucasian Military District

361.272

4,2

Volga Military District

272.926

3,1

Ural Military District

210.153

2,4

Siberian Military District

224.320

2,5

1.494.600

17,2%

Trans-Baikal Military District

469.750

5,5

Far Eastern Military District

800.530

9,2

Transcaucasian Military District

456.728

5,3

685.004

Central Asian Military District

228.276

2,7

8,0 %

Total (without the formation of the war commissariats and without the naval fleet)

8.682.827

100

8.682.827

65

Such a distribution of locations facilitated the mobilization "West". In the interest of the shortest possible replenishment times, the reservists were to be called up where the troops were already concentrated at that time and where their deployment was planned. These figures also confirm the main directions of attack southwest and west mentioned in the operation plan of September 18, 1940. However, the above table does not reflect the strength of the grouping actually created in the western military districts towards mid-June 1941, as only a secret partial mobilization was carried out and not a general and open mobilization, but at the same time units and associations from the inner military districts were also transferred to the western military districts as part of the strategic deployment and

westward shift of the Red Army. However, it gives an idea of the priorities set in January/February 1941 when planning the mobilization.

Also of interest are the stipulations of Mobilization Plan 41 regarding the replenishment of the Red Army with officers and non-commissioned officers in the event of mobilization.

65 Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR "On the Mobilization Plan for the Year 1941 (Russian); in: The Year 1941, Documents, Part I, p. 648.

It states:

"1. The needs of the command staff in the deployment of the Red Army according to the 1941 mobilization plan (without new formations) will be covered by:

- (a) Discharges from military schools;
- b) the promotion to the middle ranks of persons with higher and middle education who are on active service in the troops and
- c) the enlistment of reserve officers. "78

Mobilization Plan 41 also specified the order in which the mobilization of the Red Army was to be carried out and stipulated that it was to be carried out in two variants:

Variant 1: mobilization of parts (individual units, formations, military districts) or the military districts of a theater of war, put into effect by special decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, with covered execution under the designation "large-scale training exercises". The call-ups are carried out by means of personal call-up orders without public announcement of the order of the People's Commissar of Defense. In other words, the implementation of covered partial mobilizations.

Variant 2: General and open mobilization of all armed forces of the USSR or individual military districts, declared by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in accordance with Article 10, Point L of the Constitution of the USSR and publicly announced.

While mobilization plan 22 also provided for two variants for the execution of the covered mobilization, according to the letters "A" and "B", variant "B" was no longer considered appropriate in mobilization plan 41.

This variant was intended for the covered replenishment of mainly the covering units and formations close to the border to approx. 75–80 %/o. Since Mobilization Plan 41 stipulated that the covering units and formations were to be kept in a reinforced state even in peacetime, it was no longer necessary to develop such a variant for mobilization.⁷⁹

Annex 1 of Mobilization Plan 41 of 12 February 1941 also makes clear the importance that was attached to the covered mobilization of the military districts of the western theater of war:

Citation III.24 (cf. p. 126)

The directives of the General Staff to the military districts for the preparation of the mobilization plans of the military districts, formations, troop units and units were issued in March 1941. For example:

Table IIL25 (cf. p. 126)

According to Mobilization Plan 41 and the few published directives addressed to the military districts, the staffs of all command levels and the troops were ordered to begin preparing the new mobilization plans after

Quote III.24

"1. for the mobilization of the western districts (Arkhangelsk, Leningrad, Baltic Special, Western Special, Kiev Special, Odessa, Moscow, Oreol, Kharkov, North Caucasian, Volga and Urals military districts) the strength will be 6,503,223 soldiers

2. in addition, the combat units of the Far Eastern Front, the Trans-Baikal and Siberian Military Districts will be kept in a reinforced inventory, which amounts to –
986,000 soldiers

3. the strength It. Peacetime staffing plan of the Transcaucasian and North Asian Military Districts – 363,200 soldiers

The total strength of the Red Army at mobilization (West) is

7,852,423 soldiers

Strength of the formation of the military commander's offices at mobilization of the western military districts – 136,000 soldiers

Total – 7,988,423 "

Table IIL25

Date of the decree

No. of the document

Addressed to the military district/force

Ordered date of completion

March 01, 1941

Mob/1/542241ss

Transcaucasian Military District

July 01, 1941

March 03/05, 1941

Mob/1/542252ss

Western Special Military District

July 01, 1941

March 07/13, 1941

Mob/1/542322ss

Far Eastern Front

July 01, 1941

March 07, 1941

Mob/1/542250ss

Main administration of the air forces

July 01, 1941

to begin immediately with the Mobilization Plan 41 and to complete its completion and "transfer to use" by 01 July 1941. 80 81 82

Introduction of a basic status

In accordance with the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of July 6, 1940, the rifle divisions were initially kept at a cadre level of 12,000, 6,000 and 3,000 cadres respectively. As the 3,000-strong divisions required a mobilization period of around one month due to the size of the personnel to be called up, the People's Commissar of Defence proposed to the Central Committee of the CP(B) in mid-March 1941 that the 3,000-strong divisions be further increased and the staffing plans adjusted. At the end of March 1941, with the planning of the reservists to be called up, the replenishment of the rifle divisions was permitted according to a uniform staffing plan.

As early as April 5, 1941, the staffing plans for No. 4/100 and No. 4/120 and the rifle divisions replenished close to the war were confirmed, as shown in Table III.26 below:

Table IIL26

Number of personnel

Heavy machine guns

Light machine guns

Rifles/ MPi
Cars
Horses
Establishment plan no. 4/120
5.864
163
324
3.685/691
155
905
Staffing plan no. 4/100
10.291
164
371
7.818/1.159
414
1.955
State of war
14.483
166
392
10.420/1204
558
3.039
71

The structure of the rifle divisions was not changed, but the wartime strength was reduced to 14,483 soldiers by reducing the number of members of the operating units and reducing the number of horse teams and team drivers by around half by switching to tractors.

The strength of the 19 mountain infantry divisions (establishment plan no. 4/140) was set at 8,829 soldiers.

The training of the mountain infantry units was not geared towards combat operations in high mountain conditions, as the leadership considered operations requiring alpine or special ski training to be unlikely. The impression must arise that the mountain rifle divisions were prepared for combat in low mountain regions. The mountain infantry divisions were deployed as follows: Kiev Special Military District- 6, Odessa Military District- 1, North Caucasian Military District- 1 and Transcaucasian Military District- 7 divisions.

The rifle troops in the western border military districts of interest to us consisted of a total of 102 divisions (95 rifle divisions and 7 mountain rifle divisions), for which Mobilization Plan 41, with the specification of 5 April 1941, specified the replenishment status shown in the following table:

Table III.27 83 84

Leningrad
Military District
Baltic Special Military District
Western Special Military District

Kiev Special Military District

Odessa Military District

Total number

Total number of rifle and mountain rifle divisions

15

19

24

32

12

102

(thereof 95 SchD.)

Of which with establishment plan

No. 4/100 10291 Soldiers)

12

14

21

24

8

79

Percentage

80%

74%

88%

75%

67%

77%

72

We can therefore conclude that 77% of the rifle units of the border military districts had a so-called basic status, i.e, a replenishment status close to that of a mobilized rifle division, whereby a total of 69 rifle divisions (Leningrad Military District -13, Baltic Special Military District - 10, Western Special Military District - 20, Kiev Special Military District -18, Odessa Military District - 8) already had an even higher replenishment status in 1940, going beyond status no. 4/100. All rifle divisions were equally filled with artillery and armored personnel carriers, regardless of their staffing plan, No. 4/100 or 4/120. Taking into account the replenishments already carried out in 1940, the measures implemented in April 1941 to reinforce many 1st line rifle divisions and the "major training exercises" carried out in the second decade of June 1941, the partial mobilization, essentially all rifle divisions of the western border military districts had reached a level of replenishment close to that of mobilized rifle divisions. They were therefore ready for war.

New formations

On April 23, 1941, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR issued decree no. 1112-459 "On new formations in the Red Army", which stipulated that further formations and reinforcements were to be carried out in selected military districts beyond the mobilization plan 41 of February 1941 in the shortest possible time until June 1, 1941. 85

It was ordered:

1. to set up 10 anti-tank artillery brigades (in stock 5,322 AA each, 2 artillery regiments per brigade) of the High Command Reserve and to deploy all brigades in the western border military districts (Kiev

- Special Military District – 5, Western Special Military District – 3, Baltic Special Military District – 2);
2. to form 5 airborne corps (8,020 AA each, 3 airborne brigades per corps) and to deploy all 5 airborne corps in the western border military districts (Kiev Special Military District – 2, Western Special Military District – 1, Baltic Special Military District – 1, Odessa Military District – 1);
 3. to reorganize 10 rifle divisions in the border military districts (Kyiv Special Military District – 4, Odessa Military District – 1, Transcaucasian Military District – 3, North Caucasian Military District – 1, North Asian Military District – 1) into mountain rifle divisions, thus increasing the number of mountain rifle divisions to 19;
 4. to disband 11 Rifle Divisions of the 6,000-strong inventory (exclusively in military districts in the depths of the country) in order to secure personnel for the new formations.

In addition, the People's Commissar of the Aircraft Industry was ordered to produce 11-seater cargo gliders for the airborne troops by May 15, 1941 and a further 20-seater gliders by July 1, 1941, in accordance with the order of March 21, 1941.

After the dissolution of the 21 rifle divisions and their restructuring as mountain rifle divisions as well as anti-tank artillery and airborne brigades in accordance with the stipulations of April 23, 1941, 177 pure rifle divisions remained in the rifle troops in June 1941, of which approx. 150 were stationed in the west. Thus, the final reduction in the number of divisions planned in Mobilization Plan 41 by 11 divisions from 314 to 303 on 23 April 1941 did not represent a real reduction, but rather a planned perfection of the structures from an operational point of view to implement the strategic objectives of the Operational Plan of 11 March 1941.⁸⁶

Furthermore, the formation of 5 airborne corps commands and 4 cavalry corps commands was ordered, thus enforcing the corps structure in other branches of the armed forces.

On April 23, 1941, the Central Committee of the CP(B) and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR also decided to form three more army field commands to improve troop command. The Leningrad, Baltic Special and Western Special Military Districts, i.e. three western border military districts, were ordered to carry out the new formations of the three army field commands, including one intelligence battalion each. A total of 2,235 AAs were needed, all of which were not taken from the troops, but from the People's Commissariat of Defense and the leadership of the military districts.⁸⁷

The "large-scale training exercises" of 1941 – the covered
Partial mobilization as direct preparation for war

With the directives of 23 March and 20 May 1939, the top political and military leadership created an instrument in the form of the provisions on covered partial mobilization to ensure the replenishment of the Red Army close to the wartime staffing plan within a period of up to 10 days under the pretext of "major training exercises", without having to declare open and general mobilization in front of the whole world. The call-up of 975,870 reservists, the majority of whom served primarily to replenish the rifle troops, one of the main branches of the armed forces at the time, as well as other call-ups were timed so that by around July 1, 1941, the rifle divisions could be filled up and made ready for combat close to the wartime structure, which represented a considerable increase in the combat strength of the Red Army.

The "major training exercises" in the first half of 1941 were carried out on the basis of a plan confirmed by the People's Commissar of Defense. However, the General Staff continued to issue a series of supplements and addenda.

The troops taking part in the "major training exercises" were given the task of:

1. to perfect combat skills of called-up reservists in the respective wartime planned duty positions,
 2. to develop the skills of the combat crews of the units and troop units in structures close to wartime,
- and

3. to train the practical skills of commanders and senior staff in the command of units and formations in combat. 88

In the original directives of the General Staff to the military districts, the duration of the "major training exercises" was set at 45 days for the units and troop units of the infantry and armoured troops, 60 and 90 days respectively for units providing security and rear facilities, and initially 903,806 reservists were ordered to be called up and the reservist exercises to be carried out in the period from June 1 to October 15, 1941.

However, in an excerpt from a resolution of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CP(B) dated March 8, 1941, it says

Quote III.28 (cf. p. 131)

The Politburo of the Central Committee of the CP(B) based this decision on the staffing plan laid down in the directive of the Council of People's Commissars of July 6, 1940, according to which rifle divisions as cadre divisions were to have a staff of 3,000, 6,000 or 12,000 soldiers.

On the basis of the decree of March 1941, which, according to the initial plan, initially provided for 274,950 reservists to be called up to the rifle divisions, and taking into account the call-ups that were carried out in April 1941 to reinforce many units of the first operational echelon of the border military districts, their number was soon increased to 300,200 by a supplement to the plan for the "major training exercises".

Quote III.28

"1. to allow the People's Commissar for Defense to send 975,870 soldiers to the "Great Training Exercises" in 1941.

training exercises" 975,870 conscripts of the reserve, of which

with a duration of 90 days - 192,869 people

60 days - 25,000 people

45 days - 754,896 people

30 days - 3,105 people

3. to carry out the exercises

a) in the reserve rifle divisions ...

b) in the rifle divisions of the 6,000-man contingent in the period - from May 15 to July 01;

c) in the rifle divisions of the 3,000-strong inventory in the period - from August 15 to October 01;

d) the remaining exercises one after the other in the period of the year 1941."

77

This meant that initially:

10 rifle divisions - to a stock of approx. 14,000 soldiers and

51 rifle divisions - to a total of approx. 11,000 soldiers.

In the Kiev Special Military District alone, 23 rifle divisions were thus replenished.

The operational plan of May 15, 1941, which represented the final specification of the Red Army's operational plans, made the following stipulation regarding the implementation of mobilization:

Quote III.29

" 1. to carry out the covered mobilization under the guise of reserve training exercises. "

78

In May 1941, a further decision was made to significantly increase the number of reservists to be called up to the rifle squads.

According to information from the Chief of the Mobilization Administration of the General Staff of the

Red Army, addressed to the Chief of the Operational Administration of the General Staff, dated May 20, 1941 at the latest, the increase from 5,000 to 6,000 conscripts was made to each of the rifle divisions participating in the "Great Training Exercises".

Those 78 rifle divisions of the border military districts with staffing plan no. 4/100 (10,291 soldiers), which had already been increased to approx. 12,000 soldiers (of which 6 rifle divisions to approx. 11,000 soldiers) in April 1941 through the call-ups and further reinforcements, were to reach their full combat strength after the addition of approx. 2,000 further reservists per division in the course of the covered partial mobilization.

of the covered partial mobilization as well as the remaining motor vehicles (approx. 150 vehicles) and horses (approx. 1,100 horses) after approx. 3 to 4 days. 91

Contrary to the decision of March 8, 1941, the start of all "major training exercises" was restricted to the period from June 1 to 15, 1941 in May 1941 (at the latest on May 20) on the basis of the operational plan of May 15, 1941. All later call-up dates for reservists, such as July 15 or August 1941, were brought forward to June 10, 1941.92

With the increase in the number of those to be called up and the units and troop units taking part in the "major training exercises", as well as the restriction on the dates of the "major training exercises", the military districts were also ordered in May 1941 to fill 47 artillery regiments of the artillery reserve of the High Command with reservists from a total of 55 existing artillery regiments. In this way, 85 % of the 1st. In this way, 85 % of the 1st. staffing plan of the peacetime artillery regiments of the High Command Reserve were replenished. The training exercises of the artillery regiments were to have a duration of 45 days and were to be carried out in the period from June 10 to July 25, 1941. The reservists were generally deployed to complete the gunnery operations. 93

While the order of the Military Council of the Red Army of 21 May 1941 to call up 38,500 reservists on 1 July 1941 was issued on the basis of Mobilization Plan 41, the unplanned increase of a further 136,700 reservists also served to form 110 additional artillery/machine gun battalions on 1 July 1941. 94 Only in the five border military districts (Leningrad, Baltic Special, Western Special, Kiev Special and Odessa Military Districts) were call-ups to the bridge-building and pontoon battalions ordered in the amount of 4,310 reservists in the period from June 10 to July 25, 1941.95

Similarly, only in the western military districts (Leningrad, Baltic Special, Kiev Special, Odessa, Kharkov and Transcaucasian Military Districts) were 28,584 reservists called up to the engineer battalions of the rifle corps and divisions. In the Kiev Special Military District alone, 10,675 sappers were drafted into the sapper battalions.96

The training of 50,000 non-commissioned officers from the soldier reserve was pursued with determination. While 23,705 NCOs were trained as part of the "major training exercises" in the period from June 1, 1941, 26,295 NCOs had already been trained in the troop units in an initial phase from February to April 1941.

In addition, as of June 15, 1941, there were already 97,231 reservists out of 98,783 soldiers with special functions in the troop units and units.97

For the troop units and units of the fortified areas, 26,230 reservists had been called up as part of the "major training exercises". On June 22, 1941, there were actually 17,862 draftees in the fortified areas. However, this only corresponded to 10 % of the personnel mobilization requirements of the fortified areas. The called-up reservists were initially used to further expand the fortified areas.98

To ensure the expansion of airfields, primarily in the border military districts, the call-up of 17,294 reservists to the airfield construction battalions was ordered. The Leningrad Military District received 1,500 reservists, the Baltic Special Military District 1,875, the Western Special Military District 2,773, the Kiev Special Military District 4,421 and the Odessa Military District 750.

20,711 reservists were called up to the air defense units.

On June 1, 1941, there were already 755,264 soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers of the reserve, clothed and armed in the Red Army, more than 600,000 of them directly in their conscripting units.⁹⁹

According to reports from the military districts, the number of reservists called up as part of the "major training exercises" in a total of 99 rifle divisions on June 21, 1941, one day before the start of the war, was 493,181 soldiers. With these reservists, the following replenishment level was achieved in the rifle divisions at the beginning of the war:

Table III.30

Number of divisions

Replenishment status as of June 22, 1941

Status of the rifle divisions

20 rifle divisions

(It. Lenski-21)

72 rifle divisions (It. Lenski - 70) 6 rifle divisions

Replenished to 14,000 soldiers

Replenished to approx. 12,000 soldiers

Replenished to approx. 11,000 soldiers

Approaching war replenishment

Combat-ready status

Limited combat capability

According to the Chief of the Mobilization Administration, 15 rifle divisions were stationed in the Kiev Special Military District, to which 1,900 or 2,000 reservists were called up as part of the "Great Training Exercises" and filled up to approx. 14,000 soldiers. All other rifle divisions had already been replenished to at least 12,000 soldiers. ¹⁰⁰

As a result of the covered partial mobilization in the summer of 1941, all rifle divisions were replenished with personnel close to the wartime structure and must be classified as combat-ready.

According to the reports, the replenishments of the rifle divisions were distributed among the military districts as follows at the beginning of the war:

Table III.31 (cf. p. 134)

Table III.31

Military district

Number of rifle divisions

Number of conscripts

Leningrad Military District

4

20.000

Baltic Special Military District

6

36.000

Moscow Military District

10

60.000

Western Special Military District

4

24.000	
Kiev Special Military District	
26	
65.500	
Odessa Military District	
5	
29.712	
Kharkov military district	
10	
59.000	
North Caucasian Military District	
7	
38.694	
Volga Military District	
7	
41.426	
Urals Military District	
6	
36.000	
Siberian Military District	
6	
35.799	
Archankelsk Military District	
1	
5.000	

This table provides information about the military districts of origin of the replenished rifle divisions, but no information about their location at the time of the "Great Training Exercises", as the western transfer of the units from the internal military districts of the Red Army had already been initiated with the directives of May 13, 1941.

Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the replenishment with reservists was concentrated on the military districts of the western theater of war and that the troops in the border military districts were primarily replenished. Particular emphasis was placed on those military districts which, according to the operational plans, were to carry out the main strike in the south-western and western directions. According to the strength reports of the military districts, the Red Army had a total of 802,138 called-up reservists on June 22, 1941 as part of the "major training exercises". According to reports from the Moscow military district, 93 % of those called up followed their orders to report for duty; those not called up had been made unavailable for work in the armaments industry.

M.V. Sakharov argued that the decision taken in May 1941 to increase the number of divisions, artillery units and army facilities taking part in the "major training exercises" took account of the tense situation.¹⁰¹

The following time graph shows a brief outline of the formations, deployments and replenishments for the extreme increase in the combat strength of the Red Army in the second stage of the mobilizations in 1941, the period of preparation for war.

Figure III.32 (cf. p. 135)

Figure III.32 shows: All formations of formations and troop units, which the Mobilization Plan 41 set

for the year 1941, were generally to be completed by 01 July 1941, by 01 October 1941 only individual ones, which could by no means be ensured in the shortest possible time with combat technology.

All mechanized corps of the border and interior military districts were filled with personnel to almost 100 %.

Figure IIL32

Formations, deployments, replenishments

October/November 1940, Stalin's directive on formation (see Stage I):

1 additional mechanized corps (9th MechK in the Kiev Special Military District as of 1 May 1941)

18 independent tank brigades as of May 01, 1941

20 machine-gun artillery brigades as of May 1, 1941

February 12, 1941, enactment of mobilization plan 41

Expansion of the restructuring of the armoured troops from 9 to 30 mechanized corps (60 armoured and 30 motorized divisions) Increase in the number of rifle divisions from 168 to 198 Formation of the 30 additional rifle divisions within the shortest possible time; beginning in March 1941

Formation of a further 2 motorized rifle divisions Formation of 10 mountain rifle divisions

March 1941, decree to call up 975,870 reservists (493,181 of them to the rifle divisions) in the period from May 15 to initially September 5, 1941

April 23, 1941, directive for the development of 5 airborne corps from the existing 6 airborne brigades by

June 01, 1941

Formation of 10 anti-tank artillery brigades by

June 01, 1941

Increase in the number of mountain infantry divisions from 10 to 19 by June 22, 1941

24 May 1941, General Staff directive on the interim equipping of 50 tank regiments of the second-order mechanized corps with anti-tank guns by 1 July 1941 at the latest 20 May 1941, decision on the time restriction of the call-up of reservists to the "major training exercises" to 1-15 June 1941

May 25, 1941, directive of the Military Council of the Red Army to call up 38,500 reservists at the end of May/beginning of June 1941 and a further 136,700 reservists on July 1, 1941

Mid-June 1941, General Staff directive on the temporary detachment of officers to organize and support mobilization tasks in the troops

June 26, 1941, order of the General Staff of the Red Army on the transition of the Northwest, West and Southwest Fronts to combat command from the field command posts